MAN, MYTH & MAGIC

The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mythology, Religion and the Unknown

ACPL ITEM
DISCARDED

133.03
M31
1995
v. 15

WAY

ALLEN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
[redacted]
3 1833 02692 5120

133.03 M31 1995 v. 15

Man, myth & magic [redacted]

ALLEN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
FORT WAYNE, INDIANA 46802

You may return this book to any location of
the Allen County Public Library.

DEMCO

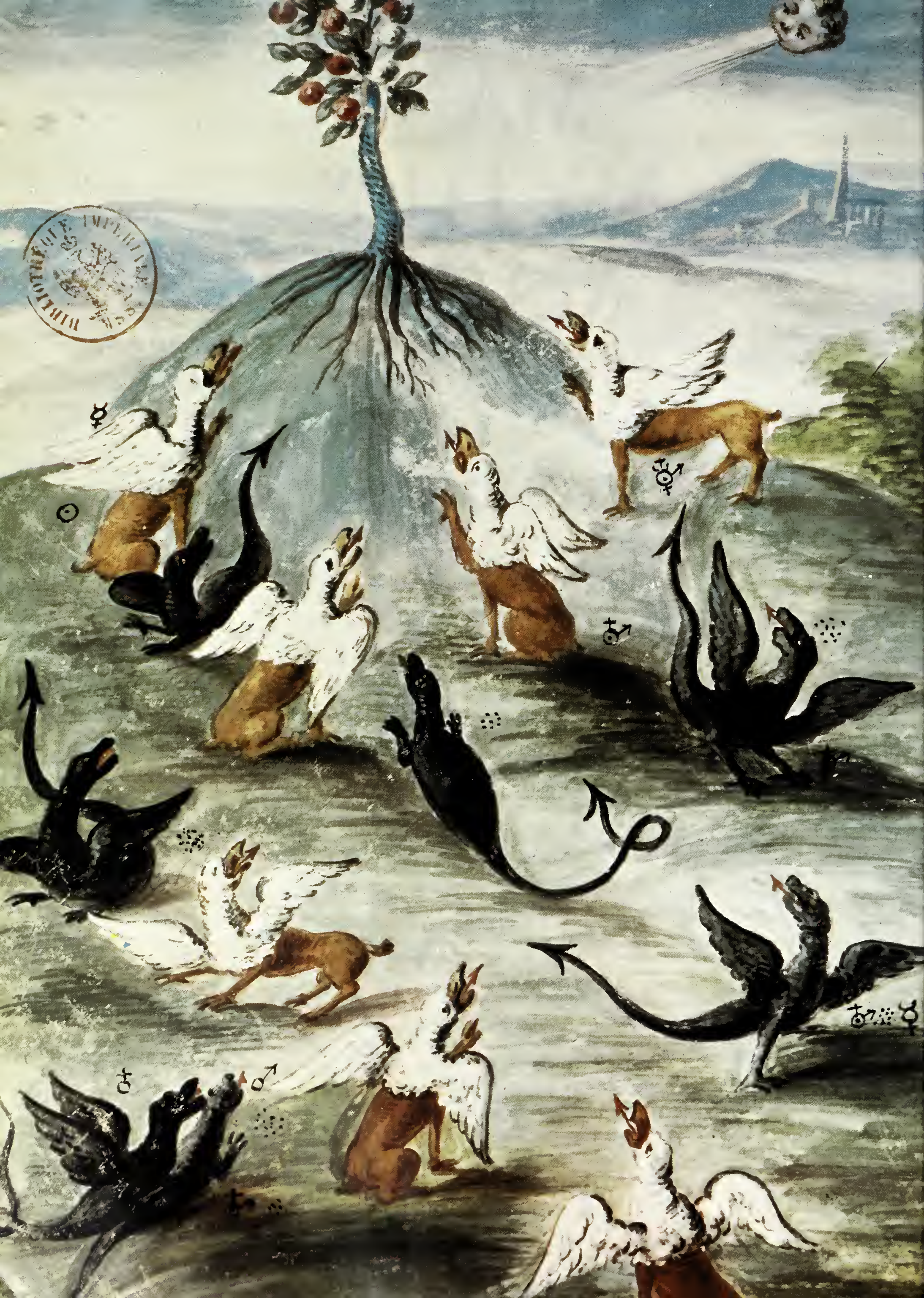
Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2017

https://archive.org/details/manmythmagicillu15cave

MAN,
MYTH &
MAGIC

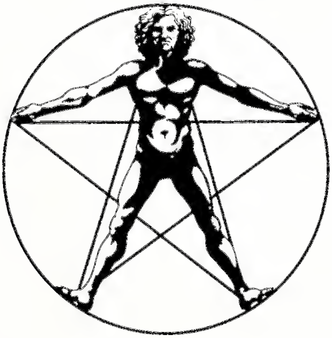
VOLUME 15

Phal-Rasp



BIBLIOTHEQUE IMPERIALE MSS

MAN, MYTH & MAGIC



The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mythology, Religion and the Unknown

Editor-in-Chief
Richard Cavendish

Editorial Board
C. A. Burland; Professor Glyn Daniel;
Professor E. R. Dodds; Professor Mircea Eliade;
William Sargant; John Symonds;
Professor R. J. Zwi Werblowsky;
Professor R. C. Zaehner.

New Edition edited and compiled by
Richard Cavendish and Brian Innes

MARSHALL CAVENDISH
NEW YORK, LONDON, TORONTO, SYDNEY

EDITORIAL STAFF	
Editor-in-Chief	Richard Cavendish
Editorial Board	C. A . Burland Glyn Daniel E. R. Dodds Mircea Eliade William Sargant John Symonds R. J. Zwi Werblowsky R. C. Zaehner
Special Consultants	Rev. S. G. F. Brandon Katherine M. Briggs William Gaunt Francis Huxley John Lehmann
Deputy Editor	Isabel Sutherland
Assistant Editors	Frank Smyth Malcolm Saunders Tessa Clark Julie Thompson Polly Patullo
Art Director	Brian Innes
Art Editor	Valerie Kirkpatrick
Design Assistant	Andrzej Bielecki
Picture Editors	John McKenzie Ann Horton
REVISED 1985	
Executive Editor	Yvonne Deutch
Editorial Consultant	Paul G. Davis
Editors	Emma Fisher Mary Lambert Sarah Litvinoff
REVISED 1995	
Editors	Richard Cavendish Brian Innes
Assistant Editor	Amanda Harman

Allen County Public Library
900 Webster Street
PO Box 2270
Fort Wayne, IN 46801-2270

Frontispiece: Instructions for the making of the Philosopher's Stone were couched in an obscure symbolic language: illustration from a 17th-century manuscript, in which the hybrid creatures represent opposites that must be separated (Bibiothèque Nationale, Paris)

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Man, myth and magic: the illustrated encyclopedia of mythology, religion and the unknown / editor in chief, Richard Cavendish

Rev. ed. of Man, myth & magic.
Includes bibliographical references and index
ISBN 1-85435-731-X (set)
1. Occultism – Encyclopedias. 2. Mythology – Encyclopedias. 3. Religion – Encyclopedias.
I. Cavendish, Richard. II. Man, myth & magic.
BF 1407.M34 1994
133'.03 – dc20

94-10784
CIP

Published by Marshall Cavendish Corporation
2415 Jerusalem Avenue
North Bellmore, New York 11710

© Marshall Cavendish Corporation 1995
© Marshall Cavendish Ltd 1983, 1985
© B. P. C. Publishing Limited 1970

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission from the copyright holders.

Printed and Bound in Italy by L.E.G.O. S.p.a. Vicenza.

CONTENTS Volume 15

Phallic Symbolism 2023
Phantasms of the Living 2026
Pharisees 2026
Philosopher's Stone 2027
Phoenicians & Cartaginians 2028
Phoenix 2033
Phrenology & Physiognomy 2036
Picatrix 2038
Pieta 2039
Pietism 2039
Pig 2039
Pilgrimage 2041
Mrs Piper 2045
Pisces 2046
Planchette 2046
Planets 2046
Plants 2047
Plato's Myths 2051
Plotinus 2053
Pluto 2054
Plymouth Brethren 2055
Pneuma 2055
Poets 2055
Poisoning 2060
Poltergeists 2064
Polynesia & Micronesia 2069
Pontius Pilate 2073
Poseidon 2074
Possession 2075
Prayer 2079
Precognition 2079
Predestination 2079
Premonition 2081
Pricking 2082
Priests 2083
H. J. Prince 2090
Proclus 2092
Prometheus 2094
Prophecy 2097
Prostitution 2102
Psi 2105
Psyche 2105
Psychical Research 2105
Psychic Attack 2111
Psychic Surgery 2115
Psychokinesis 2117
Psychometry 2123
Psychotronics 2126
Puck 2127
Pueblo Indians 2128
Punch and Judy 2135
Purgatory 2135
Pygmies 2138
Pyramidology 2143
Pythagoras 2145
Quartz 2146
Queen of Sheba 2146
Quetzalcoatl 2148
Quicksilver 2148
Quietism 2148
Radiesthesia 2150
Ragnarok 2153
Rain 2153
Rainbow 2153
Ramakrishna 2155
Ramana Maharshi 2156
Rasputin 2157
Raven 2160
Re 2160

In the curve of a hill, in the lofty rigidity of a tree, in fruit such as the many-seeded fig, symbols of sexual potency have been recognized, as indeed they may be seen in man's own handiwork; the main purpose of phallic symbolism is to inspire man or Nature to increase and multiply

PHALLIC SYMBOLISM

IT WAS ONCE widely believed that a magical power resided in the male and female organs of sex. The powers of reproduction were thought to be among the fundamental potencies of the universe. From earliest times men have been aware of the numinous mystery of sexual intercourse and have idealized the sexual apparatus as the seat of pleasurable experience, the fount of all creative activity, and the origin of all the manifold pageantry of the life around them. They made images of the sexual organs in realistic or symbolic forms, and treated them both as objects of reverence and the source of fecundity and increase, and as the power behind paternity, motherhood, fertility, food and seasonal cycles. Some authorities believe that these images may have been worshipped even before homage was paid to the gods themselves.

But these representations are not just material substitutes for the objects depicted. A distinction must be drawn between a symbol and a sign. The latter, such as the familiar traffic sign, is fixed and limited, and has no relevance beyond the purpose immediately intended. A symbol, on the other hand, is a sign with a profound meaning, which covers a much wider range of significance, and in many cases is believed to be occultly linked with what it represents. Symbols are products of the unconscious

G. Tomsich Spectrum

The organs of generation, male and female, were often modelled in disproportionate size to stress their power and importance: Etruscan figure in bronze, 4th to 3rd centuries BC

mind and connect almost magically with various levels of reality.

Phallic symbols are close to what psychologists call archetypal forms; they relate not only to individual but to past racial experience. It is felt that many such phallic symbols arose spontaneously in varied guises in dreams and trances, and came to be embodied in folklore, mythology and religion.

From prehistoric times men have made clay idols, wooden figures and metal sculptures, depicting the primary sexual attributes of their chief deities. The walls of many old Egyptian temples have phallic carvings, and the Greek historian and traveller Herodotus described phallic statues of Osiris in Egyptian villages in his day, in the 5th century BC. In certain ancient Egyptian ceremonies the figure of the male deity was carried in procession with organ erect. Such ithyphallic statuettes were modelled on a smaller scale and popularly used in various rites as talismanic figurines to cure disease, obtain children, cure impotence or bring good luck.

Similar representations are found in the early centres of civilization in Central and South America. Phallicism is found in profusion in the religious life of India, notably in the stylized representations of the male and female principles known as the *lingam* and the *yoni*. China and Japan are no less prodigal in their portrayal of the sex organs, both separately and in union. Phallicism is also widespread among certain tribal religions in West Africa, and was prominent in the religious life of Arabia before Islam. The prophet Mohammed was said to have destroyed dozens of obscene idols when he conquered Mecca, in a determined campaign to obliterate all traces of the older religion.

Wherever phallic worship prevailed, ritual dances were enacted, hymns were sung, and the sacred symbol adored as the supreme deity of the pantheon. Temple prostitutes were in attendance to serve the devotees, and on certain occasions the act of intercourse was dramatized by the high priest and priestess, to imitate the principal divine function. At appointed times and seasons of the year phallic emblems were consumed at a ritual supper. Bread was baked in the shape of the male or female organ, or the female breast, or the two organs conjoined in union, and these were eaten by the worshippers or carried home to the family in order to increase or induce their power of fertility. Even the more civilized Greeks used phallus-shaped cakes at their sacred festivals, such as the *Thesmophoria*.

It was inevitable that where the power of the sexual element was uninhibitedly recognized, it should be raised to divine status and represented by gods and goddesses. Such divinities of sexuality are found in many religious systems: in Egypt there were Isis and Osiris; in Canaan, Baal and Ashtoreth; in India, Shiva and Shakti. Among the Greeks and Romans there were Aphrodite or Venus, Priapus, Pan and several others. These deities took under their special care the fertility of crops and cattle, and the fecundity of women. Temples dedicated to them contained the 'organs of generation', both male and female, often modelled in disproportionate size to emphasize their importance. Where male deities were depicted they were often shown with the phallus erect.

A Catalogue of Symbols

Evidence of phallic symbolism is found long before man became 'civilized'. Prehistoric man was surrounded by the unpredictable vagaries of Nature; and as he developed his knowledge of agriculture and animal husbandry, he became increasingly aware of the need to ensure the fertility of his fields and livestock. And so he began to evolve the earliest magical symbolism to achieve their increase.

The catalogue of symbols naturally grew with the development of his civilization. The phallus, being the direct instrument of increase, and the womb, being the receptacle wherein life was incubated, naturally became the two principal symbols.

Apart from these obvious emblems, many others were adopted, on an analogous association of ideas, from natural phenomena – from the sky, the life-giving rain, the pregnant earth, the rounded hills, from rivers and mountain cascades, from plants and fruit and flowers. Fruit-bearing trees that gave proof of their fertility, such as the fig with its myriad seeds, were almost universally upheld as representing sexual abundance. Again, the many-petalled lotus and the rose express a much more sophistical

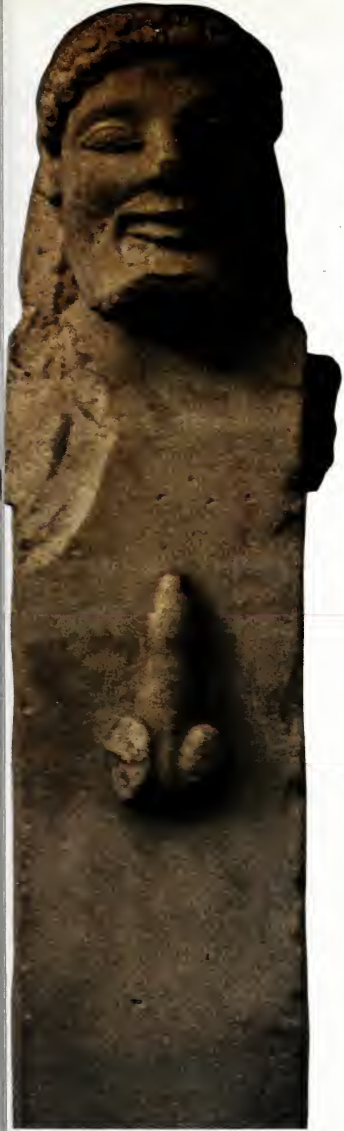
Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Palermo

K. Cohen Collection/Werner Forman

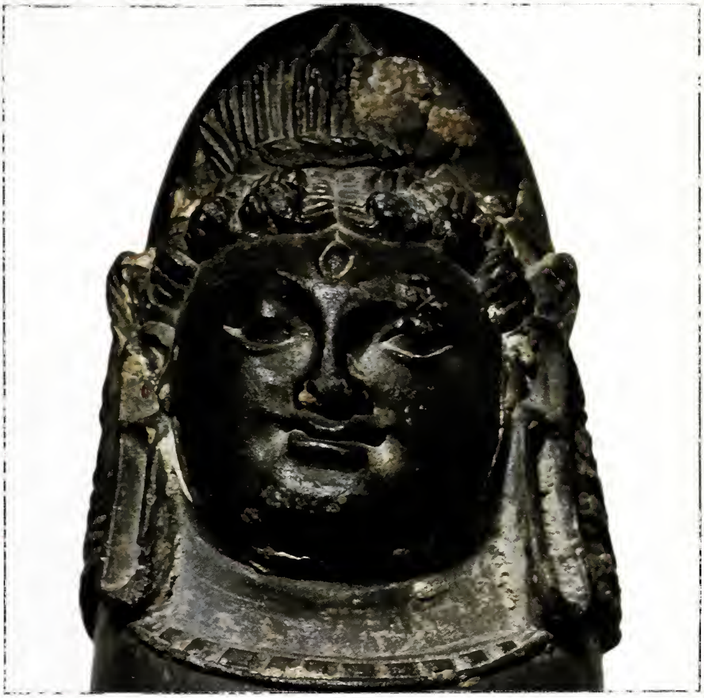
The feeling that the sex organs are dirty and disgusting has not been shared by most of the world's population. 'The powers of reproduction were thought to be among the fundamental potencies of the universe', and to represent them in images was to invoke them to activity. From prehistoric times men have made idols and figures depicting the primary sexual attributes of their chief deities

Left **Etruscan bronze, 4th century BC** ***Above*** **Stone carving from Anatolia, 4th millennium BC** ***Right*** **Witch's broomstick: stories of witches flying may be based on phallic dances in which the witches straddled sticks**

Chris Barker



C. M. Dixon



C. M. Dixon

'It was inevitable that where the power of the sexual element was uninhibitedly recognized, it should be raised to divine status' *Above* In India the lingam and yoni were associated with great cosmic deities including Shiva and Shakti: lingam from Kashmir, 7th or 8th century AD *Left* Greek herm, c 520 BC: the god Hermes, originally connected with cairns and represented as an upright pillar, was given a human face and an erect phallus to promote fertility. A figure of him in this form frequently stood outside houses to guard them

tylization of such symbols; in Eastern nd Western traditions respectively both have been elevated to the status of almost eligious and mystical importance (see FIG; LOTUS; ROSE).

Biblical Euphemisms

The animal kingdom has also made its ontribution. Because of their shape and moothness the fish and the snake naturally brought to mind a phallic comparison (see FISH; SERPENT). The cowrie shell and the onch whose ridges, convolutions and pink nterior suggested the vulva, were widely used to symbolize that feature of the female body. Among the birds, the dove and the parrow with their frequent love-play, and mong the domesticated animals horned beasts like the bull, the ram and the goat, because of their aggressive virility, became the special exemplars of fecundity (see BULL; DOVE; GOAT).

The Bible is replete with phallic symbolism, and with allusions to the male and female reproductive organs and the process of procreation. Like other ancient scriptures the Bible has suffered greatly at the hands of its editors who, with misplaced intent, bowdlerized the more suggestive passages and removed many references of direct sexual significance. But their revisions were not always able to conceal the original meaning.

Translators into the modern languages have further subjected the biblical texts to modification, in deference to the prevailing sentiments regarding the propriety of having the holy Scriptures contain references to the excesses of oriental libidinousness; for certain terms of dubious significance, they have preferred the more innocuous alternatives. It has been suggested that words like 'loins' and 'rock' are euphemisms, and refer to the phallus; 'groves' and 'high places' refer to places of cult prostitution; 'knowledge' often means sexual intercourse.

The pillar or pole had a phallic connotation, and there are several references in the Old Testament to such objects found in the sacred groves dedicated to phallic rites. Ceremonial worship in such groves included the insertion of a pole into a stone socket, to symbolize the union of the two sex principles. These rites were deplored by the prophets as a menace to the worship of Yahweh, and many attempts were made to root out such Canaanitish abominations.

Some authorities have held that the ark of the covenant, the wooden chest that was housed in the Holy of Holies in the Temple of King Solomon, contained a number of cult objects among which was a symbolic image of the masculine and feminine sexual organs in union. Such representations are found in several ancient religious sculptures. The ancient Greeks celebrated the Eleusinian Mysteries (see ELEUSIS), of which not much is known. What seems clear is that there was a ritual ceremony in which certain things 'not to be mentioned' were born in sacred procession in a closed basket. Some said that the basket contained a model of the male organ locked in union with the female organ of the goddess Demeter.

A great deal of sexual symbolism has been ascribed to architecture, in particular to religious buildings, and phallic origins have been traced in the columns and capitals, the round towers, the spires and minarets, while the female organs have been seen as the basis of the arch and the keystone. While it may be objected that such parallels are exaggerated, there does seem to be some justification for this view in the obvious shape of certain architectural features. Although it may be difficult to concede that every dome represents the female breast or every pillar the virile member, some structural components do strongly suggest phallic affinities. Besides these symbolizations, there are other details that are quite plainly sexual in character. In Ireland until comparatively recently there were carvings of females with very exaggerated sexual organs called *Sheila-na-gig*, and these frequently formed the keystone of the arches on church doors. Most of them were removed during the 19th century, and some have been placed in museums. Such figures are also known to have existed in various English churches.

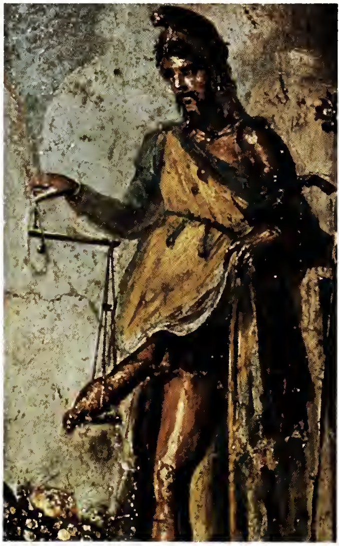
A Freudian Interpretation

Phallic symbolism was also carried over into spheres of life where its character was not at once apparent. The shape of the organs was stylized in elongations and points, and in ovals and circles. Freudian psychology seemed to confirm the sexual connotation of such symbols, and in general sticks, crosses, poles, knives, fish and trees represented the penis; while pits, caves, wells and gardens represented the female genitals. Naturally, many such representations were dismissed as being based on fanciful resemblances, but the underlying motivation in most cases has been clear on closer examination.

Modern students find evidence of sexual symbolism not only in those resemblances found in Nature and in the visible and material artefacts made by man, but also in the behaviour of men and women, in their speech, in their social conduct, in their games and pastimes (the maypole is a conspicuous example), their hidden revelations, as in dreams, and in their intellectual and artistic activities such as art, music and even philosophy. There is hardly a facet of life to which a sexual meaning has not been attributed.

In the past the intention of all phallic images was largely magical in character. They were not made for amusement, or for sexual instruction or marital inspiration, like a pornographic device or a 'pin-up'. They were primarily meant to fulfil an occult function. In some cases the reason behind such reproductions was to inspire man or Nature to bring down upon the community abundance and increase for men, animals and plants. As such it was a form of imitative magic, to induce heaven to respond in the manner suggested by the symbol and invoke the supernatural powers so that they would bestow the blessings of fertility upon the earth.

These symbols, either the phallus or vulva, separately or in union, were likewise used as a means of averting the Evil Eye and the effects of envy and malice, or to ward off evil spirits whose presence might bring danger to the household, and in general any evil influences or ill-luck that might be around. Until recently shops in China had erotic prints hanging on the wall to prevent fires.


Ronald Sheridan

Wherever phallic worship prevailed, Temple prostitutes were in attendance to serve the devotees, and even at Pompeii, where the rites of Dionysius were performed, some of the old traditions seem to have survived: wall painting from a Roman brothel at Pompeii

The Great Divide

In some esoteric religious cults the whole universe is thought to be ultimately resolved into two basic elements which are sexual in character. The Taoists of China, for example, speak of Yang, the male principle, and Yin, the female principle, which permeate everything, for without these two elements nothing can subsist.

In Indian religion the Tantrics (see TANTRISM) similarly postulate these two dual elements in divine form as Shiva and Shakti, the male and female deities whose generative powers, sent forth in the form of radiant energy, cross and recross to form the basic building bricks of the entire cosmos. Shiva and Shakti are inherent in all things, and nothing can exist without their presence (see SHIVA). Nothing was more exalted than the sexual function, and the act of union was woven into the creeds of many sects as part of the divine purpose underlying all creation. All existence was thought to be contingent on the act of sex, and some Cabalists, amongst others, held that the universe existed only so long as the sex act was being performed and that if at any time it was stopped, the whole panorama of the universe would come to a standstill and melt away.

It has also appeared to some people that there was a close internal correspondence between the sexual organs and the cosmos, and therefore a cosmic significance was read into the sexual act, making it a kind of mystery which could be symbolically enacted on earth to create a corresponding activity in the higher supraterrestrial planes. Since man was part of the cosmic pattern, and in fact the chief representative of the cosmos in its entirety, it was thought possible for him by means of certain actions to activate the cosmic forces. This is the basis of the curious phenomena of sexual mysticism wherever it is taught and practised.
(See also FERTILITY; LOVE MAGIC; SEX.)

BENJAMIN WALKER

FURTHER READING: H. Cutner, *A Short History of Sex Worship* (Watts, 1940); Benjamin Walker, *Sex and the Supernatural* (Macdonald, 1970); T. Vangaard, *Phallos* (International Universities Press, 1972).

Phantasms of the Living

Spectral appearances of people who are alive, distinguished from the ghosts of the dead; frequently reported appearing to close friends or relatives of the person seen at a time of crisis in that person's life (just before the moment of death, for instance) or to herald some disaster; to see your own 'double' is widely believed to be a sign that your death is imminent.
See ASTRAL BODY; DOUBLE; GHOSTS; MYERS; SPONTANEOUS PSI EXPERIENCES.

Ronald Sheridan

Pharisees

Described by the historian Josephus as 'a body of Jews who profess to be more religious than the rest and to explain the law more precisely': they attached great importance to strict observance of the written law of Moses and the traditional law which had grown up around it; though attacked as pedants and hypocrites in the New Testament, they seem to have been admired by most Jews.

PHILOSOPHERS' STONE

ALCHEMY drew many of its basic ideas from late classical spirituality, as manifested, for example, in gnostic and Neoplatonic doctrines, and after the triumph of Christianity advocates of these ideas found it necessary to work 'underground'. To camouflage their ideas they resorted to an obscure symbolic language in committing their theories to writing which remains largely incomprehensible to us (see ALCHEMY).

Alchemical texts were not written to provide outsiders with information. Only those who had grasped the fundamental knowledge by the grace of God, and who had been instructed personally by the more experienced, could expect to find confirmation and additional instruction in these books. Those not initiated had little chance of attaining the goal of the art. For them the process of transmutation, veiled in obscure symbolic imagery, remained a series of mysterious and virtually unworkable chemical operations which were supposed to make it possible to turn base metals into silver and gold. In fact only a few of the instructions, especially in the older treatises, relate to chemical operations. The bulk of them are spiritual processes of purging and purifying. But the alchemist was not merely talking in allegories. The true adept was not ashamed to work with chemicals in his laboratory, in order to see the concrete realization of his theory of the progressive spiritualization of matter. It is this parallel concept of both a spiritual and a material process, regarded as perfectly natural by the alchemists, which causes us to classify alchemy as one of the magical arts. For in alchemy no one asks how the spiritual perfection of the adept is supposed to bring about the purification of the substance he is treating. Our scientific logic simply does not apply to the alchemist's mode of thought.

In the older texts the Philosophers' Stone, *lapis philosophorum* or *lapis philosophicum*, is the final object of all the operations. By a curious paradox they also frequently use the same expression for the substance with which the work has to begin, the *prima materia*, the material to be worked on. The beginning and the ending of the process are firmly connected, and the primary substance is often referred to as 'our stone', *lapis noster*, as if its ability to germinate and develop into the final substance was its basic property.

The *prima materia* was the subject of much speculation. It is described as a substance which is common and easily obtained but only the initiated recognize it. A 17th century text says: 'I shall tell you of a stone which is not a stone . . . It is like thick curdling milk, but it is not milk, like mud, but not like any other mud. It resembles a green poisonous thing, because frogs crouch beneath it, but it is not a poison, it is a medicine. In sum, it is the earth from which Adam was fashioned.' The alchemist Heinrich Khunrath (1560–1605) referred to the primary substance as 'Adam's slimy earth'.

Hermann Kopp, a German historian of alchemy, says: 'Substances from the mineral kingdom, different plants and saps, the secretions and excretions of the animal world, even the most disgusting things were subjected to a thorough examination . . . They tried milk, but with little faith, and then saliva to see if that was the *materia prima*, and frequently made use of human faeces and urine in their operations.' It is not clear what was really involved but the authors of the old texts probably imagined it to be some form of primeval slime, from which all the phenomena of Nature had developed.

Making the Stone

Once the alchemist had chosen a substance on which to work, it had then to pass through various stages before it could be deemed to have all the qualities of the Stone. In describing the process the texts frequently differ in detail but roughly the same general pattern of operations was usually recommended. First, the substance must be reduced to a liquid, or dissolved in a liquid called 'mercurial water', for only in this state was it capable of change. This stage in the process was called solution or liquefaction.

Next, the material was embedded in 'the belly of the earth', in horse dung, whose gently fermenting heat caused it to darken in colour. This was the *nigredo*, sometimes symbolically represented by a raven, and the material underwent putrefaction in the same way as a buried corpse. The disintegration was followed by a process of reversal during which the material lost its dark hue and became lighter. This was the *albedo* or 'whitening', which might be symbolically expressed as the black raven turning into a white dove. The 'spirit', or matter dissipated by evaporation, must be returned to the transformed substance in the process called reduction. The white material was treated with 'philosophical milk' and turned yellow.

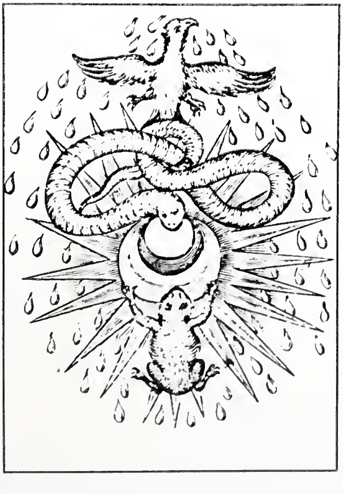
This was a critical stage in the operation for the process of reduction could easily go wrong, and all the previous efforts were wasted. However, if it was successfully achieved, the material in the alchemist's vessel turned red (*rubedo*) and was said to 'turn to blood', like 'a red dragon tearing itself to pieces'. The liquid material was now required to regain its former solid state, but at a much higher spiritual level, in a process known as fixation or coagulation. Many texts recommend the application of heat from the 'philosophical fire' and an additive of 'gold yeast' (a mixture of sulphur, gold and quicksilver) at this point.

The final stage, after all the other processes have been completed successfully, is the formation of the Philosophers' Stone itself. From it the elixir of life can be produced, and it can be used to turn lead into gold. Alchemical texts differ in the number of stages into which they divide the operation, some reckoning four essential steps, some seven, some 12, but the underlying procedure is usually roughly similar.

On the other hand, Johannes Isaac Hollandus, an alchemist active at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, recommended that the purified parts of the *prima materia* (which he calls 'vitriol') should be oxidized at a moderate temperature, preferably in a sealed vessel, until they turn red. The oxide is then dissolved in distilled vinegar and evaporated, this operation being repeated several times. The purified residue is treated in a retort: yellow vapours rise up and are condensed, followed by a red 'oil' and finally by white vapours. The pure white salt left at the bottom of the retort is impregnated with its own distillate, and this process is repeated until a mass emerges which is 'firm, but fluid like wax and as penetrating as oil'. This is the Stone which ennobles metals and as an elixir can cure all ills.

This description is clearly more concerned with genuine chemical processes and less with symbols of spiritual purification. It dates from the time when alchemy was about to split into speculative 'hermetic philosophy' on the one hand, and chemistry as we know it on the other. The important nigredo or 'blackening' stage has already disappeared, and it is precisely this stage which offers such interesting possibilities of interpretation in the light of Jungian psychology. Originally, the alchemist's material seems to have undergone a process which was regarded as a 'descent', followed by an 'ascent' to a degree of perfection higher than its initial state. The 'resurrection' is described in glowing symbolic terms in the older texts and the descent was evidently regarded as a necessary precondition for it. There seems to be a gnostic view here, of matter as basically anti-spiritual and needing to be destroyed to

Instructions for the work required in obtaining the Philosophers' Stone were usually couched in a symbolic language that was so obscure that it has resisted interpretation, almost entirely, ever since: gold, as an example, has been represented at one time or another in more than sixty different ways *Below* Illustration from Elias Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (1652), in which the toad and serpent represent, respectively, the fixed and volatile elements of the process, the eagle and drops being symbols of distillation and purification



Ronan Picture Library E. P. Goldschmidt & Co Ltd

release the divine spark, the captive spiritual principle hidden within it. In alchemical texts down to the 15th century no distinction is made between the spiritual and chemical processes intended to achieve this. The adept's efforts were directed towards discovering in the chemical transformation a reflection and confirmation of his own spiritual progress.

The Red Lion

It was only in later centuries that the idealistic side of alchemy grew less important and gave way to chemical operations intended to produce synthetic gold. Descriptions of the Philosophers' Stone now became clearer and more intelligible. It is said to have a powerful but pleasing smell. Descriptions of the colour vary. In a work attributed to the mysterious 'Basil Valentine', *On the great stone of the ancient magi*, it is described as follows: 'Its colour ranges from transparent red to dark brown, from the colour of a ruby to that of a garnet, and it is incredibly heavy.' In *De signatura rerum naturalium* Paracelsus describes the Philosophers' Stone as exceedingly heavy, like a brilliant ruby (hence the symbol of the red lion), and as transparent as crystal. It is not hard, however, but as supple as resin and it will shatter like glass. When pulverized, it looks like saffron.

Johannes Baptist van Helmont, a 17th century alchemist and scientist from Brabant, describes the Stone as a heavy powder of saffron hue, which sparkles like glass that has not been completely pulverized. *The Stone of the Philosophers*, a much quoted book by George Starkey, an English adept of the 16th and 17th centuries, says: 'Having thus completed the operation, let the vessel cool, and on opening it you will perceive your matter to be fixed into a ponderous mass, thoroughly of a scarlet colour, which is easily reducible by scraping, or otherwise, and in being heated in the fire flows like wax, without smoking, flaming, or loss of substance, returning when cold to its former fixity, heavier than gold bulk for bulk, yet easy to be dissolved in any liquid, in which a few grains being taken its operation most wonderfully pervades the human body, to the extirpation of all disorders, prolonging life by its cure to its utmost period.'

The similarity between so many descriptions of the Stone suggest that either the individual authors copied from each other, or that some substance with remarkable qualities really did exist and, because it was real, was described in the same way. It no longer seems to be a matter of symbols of spiritual purification but of actual chemical processes which gave results. In the 16th century and later alchemical instructions became increasingly practical and, in the process, lose some of the exciting fascination of the older symbolism. Perhaps there really was at that time some remarkable medicine now forgotten, but the other attribute claimed for the Stone, its ability to turn molten lead into gold, is entirely contrary to our modern way of thinking. It is possible that we are confronted here with a 'parachemical' phenomenon, in which the mind of the adept himself, in a state of ecstatic rapture, caused chemical changes which would otherwise be inconceivable.

If alchemy had been concerned only with the transmutation of base metals into gold, we might well dismiss it as an aberration. Untreated ores are often quite plain, powdery, amorphous substances which show their true brilliance only when they have been skilfully smelted. An error of judgement may have caused metallurgists long ago to try to 'improve' the metals even more, to give them an ever-increasing brilliance and resemblance to gold. But in the more important of the older sources the main concern of the alchemist is not to make synthetic gold. He was concerned with the spiritualization of both himself and his material, with a gradual and toilsome progression towards a great spiritual objective.

The alchemists employed what seem to us strange methods but they were guided by noble motives in their search for the Philosophers' Stone, which was thought to function as a tangible spark of divine creative power in the midst of unpurified matter. One cannot but respect the adept's aspiring labours and relentless application in a quest which demanded all his resources. *Ars totum requirit hominem* was a celebrated maxim: 'the art requires the whole man'.

(See also ELIXIR OF LIFE; MERCURY.)

HANS BIEDERMANN

PHOENICIANS & CARTHAGINIANS

British Museum/C. M. Dixon

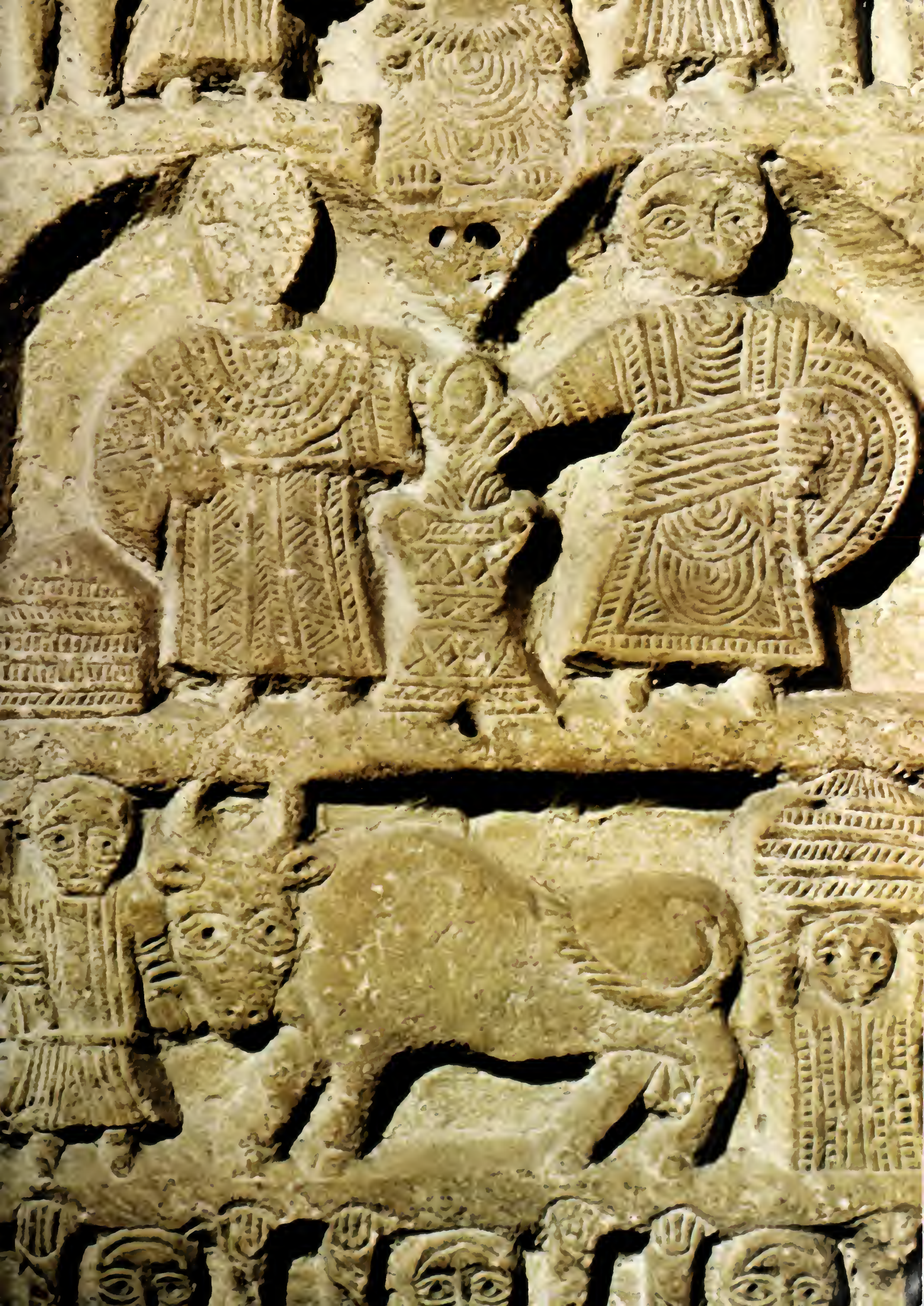
A DEGREE OF MYSTERY invests both the name and origin of the Phoenicians. *Phoenix* was a Greek word meaning 'purple-red' and 'palm tree'. The Greeks seem originally to have applied the name 'Phoenician' to the inhabitants of the coastal lands of the eastern Mediterranean, between the Nahr-el-Kabir and Mount Carmel. It is not certain whether the name referred to the darker complexion of these people in contrast to the lighter colouring of the Greeks, or to the fact that palm trees were a distinctive feature of their land. Phoenicia was also the home of the celebrated purple dye, made from the murex mollusc, which was highly prized in the ancient world. The Roman form of the name was *Poeni*, which was also used to designate the Carthaginians who had originated from Phoenicia. The Phoenicians, however, called themselves 'Canaanites' and their land was 'Canaan', so well known from the Hebrew Bible.

According to Greek writers, the Phoenicians had originally lived in the Persian Gulf area, but had migrated westwards at a remote period and settled on the Mediterranean coast. This account of their origins has not been confirmed by modern archeology. There is, indeed, much evidence of migrations of Semitic peoples from Arabia and the Persian Gulf into Syria and Palestine during the third and second millennia BC. But it would appear also that Semites were living in this area from at least the third millennium, and they cannot be distinguished from any 'Canaanite invaders'. We have, therefore, to consider the Phoenicians as Canaanites, that is, as Semitic inhabitants of the coastal area of the eastern Mediterranean. The term may also be used in a special sense after about 1200 BC, for as a result of the settlement of the Israelites and Philistines about this time in the district later known as Palestine, the area of Canaanite political independence became limited approximately to the territory occupied by the four chief Phoenician cities of Tyre, Sidon, Byblos and Aradus.

The Father of Men

Since the Phoenicians were Canaanites, the earlier form of their religion can now be studied from the ritual and mythological texts discovered since 1928 by excavation of the Canaanite city of Ugarit, close to the modern Ras Shamra. The Ugaritic texts reveal that the Canaanites of the 15th and 14th centuries BC worshipped a number of gods. The presiding deity was El, described as 'the Father of Men', who was regarded as benevolent and merciful. He was 'the Creator of Created Things', and 'the Bull'; the latter title doubtless indicated strength and virility. He is depicted on a stele as a bearded man, seated on a throne, and shown

The Phoenicians were energetic traders and colonizers who readily adopted foreign gods and foreign art styles *Left* Ivory found at Nimrud, from furniture intended for export to Egypt where the lotus was a sacred plant: 8th century BC *Right* Stele from Carthage, the principal Phoenician colony, showing animal sacrifice and offerings at an altar



with a tall crown adorned by a pair of bull's horns. A worshipper, probably a king, stands before him, making an offering.

Although El was the supreme deity, the most active god of the Canaanite pantheon was Baal (see BAAL). He was represented as young and vigorous, armed with an axe and a spear, symbolizing lightning. These weapons indicate his original name and nature – he was Hadad, the weather god. 'Baal' was a title meaning 'lord', and signified ownership or sovereignty of the land. The use of this title denoted the deity's connection with the fertility cult of Canaan; as the weather god he brought the winter rains that fertilized the land. In the mythological texts Baal is described as 'the son of Dagon', the corn god, and at Ugarit their temples were adjacent.

Closely associated with Baal was the fertility goddess Anat, who in later forms of Canaanite-Phoenician religion was called Astarte (see ASTARTE). On a stele found at Bethshan, Anat is described in Egyptian hieroglyphs as 'Antit, Queen of Heaven and Mistress of all the gods'. She seems also to have been known as *Qodshu*, which could be interpreted as 'sacred prostitute' and refer to the licentious fertility rites which were practised in her sanctuaries. Anat or Astarte was generally depicted in art as nude, with the sexual attributes emphasized.

Among the texts recorded on the tablets found at Ugarit is a long mythological poem which tells of the conflict between Baal and Mot, the personification of drought and sterility. The theme was probably inspired by the annual struggle between vegetation and drought. Baal was apparently conceived of as the spirit of vegetation as well as a fertility god. In the poem, Baal is slain by Mot and descends into the underworld. His death is mourned by El; and Anat seeks for his corpse, which she finds and buries with lamentation and the appropriate funerary rites. There is doubtless some connection here between the actions of Anat and those of the Egyptian goddess Isis in her quest for Osiris (see ISIS; OSIRIS). Anat takes revenge on Mot by killing him and treating his body as grain, winnowing, parching and grinding it. Baal eventually returns from the underworld, and Anat announces that rain will come again and the

parched earth will revive. This mythological text was doubtless related to an annual ritual commemorating the death and resurrection of vegetation (see DYING GOD; VEGETATION SPIRITS).

Evidence found at Ugarit and other sites shows that the Canaanites were attracted to other religions. Ugarit itself was a cosmopolitan port, where many languages were spoken and where Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Hittite, Hurrian and Aegean-Mycenean influences were current. A notable memorial of Aegean-Mycenean religion is an ivory carving of the fertility goddess known as the *Potnia Theron* or 'Mistress of the Animals', which was found in a tomb. The stele unearthed at Bethshan, depicting Anat-Astarte, also shows on either side of the goddess the ithyphallic Egyptian god Min and the Canaanite god Reshef, who holds an ankh, the Egyptian symbol of life. In this connection, too, there are the Egyptian mummiform sarcophagi found at Sidon, one of which bears the funerary inscription in Phoenician of Eshmunazar, a king of Sidon probably in the 6th century BC. This readiness to accept foreign deities was also a feature of Carthaginian life. The acceptance, however, often took the form of identifying the foreign deity with a Canaanite, Phoenician or Carthaginian deity, which led to confusion of conception: thus the Baalat ('lady') of Byblos was identified with the Egyptian Isis or Hathor; and Melkart, the patron god of Tyre was assimilated with the Greek Hercules.

As the titles Baal ('lord') and Baalat ('lady') were used in conjunction with some other designations to denote the patron deity of some particular place, so other titles were used. A notable instance is the name Melkart, for the chief god of Tyre: it was composed of two words meaning 'ruler' or 'king', and 'city'. As Baal Melkart, this god became one of the leading deities of Carthage, the daughter city of Tyre. More difficult to explain is the name of Sidon's patron-god, Eshmun. It has been suggested that the name derives from *shem*, 'name', meaning 'the Name' above all others. Eshmun was assimilated to the Greek healing god Asclepios. He appears to have had chthonic (underworld) attributes, which would account for his close association with the fertility goddess Astarte.

Exporting Religion

Carthage, which was destined to become Rome's great rival in the Mediterranean world, was traditionally founded in 814 BC by colonists from Tyre; it was one of many Phoenician settlements on the western Mediterranean coasts. Its position, in command of the straits between North Africa

G. Tomsich/Spectrum

G. Tomsich Spectrum

Left **Phoenician ivory plaque, 8th century BC, meant for export to Egypt and showing a lion in a lily grove, facing a sacred tree. The lion's head-dress resembles that of the Egyptian goddess Hathor. The Phoenicians themselves worshipped various fertility goddesses, as well as Baal, the weather god, and El, the father of man**
Above right **Terracotta mask found in Sardinia**
Below right **Part of a Phoenician neck-collar, found in a tomb in Sardinia, 4th century BC**

and Sicily, was one of great strategic opportunity, which it exploited to build up a commercial empire. Carthage steadily outgrew its mother city in size and importance, and even after its final destruction by Rome in 146 BC, Punic culture lived on and the old Punic gods continued to be worshipped under Roman names.

The Phoenician colonists took their native religion with them to North Africa, and it formed the fundamental pattern of Carthaginian religion. Some differences, however, did develop at Carthage, particularly with regard to the status or character of certain gods. Thus, although Melkart, the patron god of Tyre, was accorded a special position in the daughter city and an annual offering was sent to his temple at Tyre, two other deities had greater prominence at Carthage. They were Baal Hammon and Tanit Pene Baal. The origin of the former is obscure, though it has been suggested that 'Hammon' means 'altars of incense' or more plausibly, that it derives from 'Ammon', the name of the Libyan god of the Siwa oasis, whose oracle Alexander the Great once consulted. This Ammon was identified with the ancient Egyptian god Amun and the Greek Zeus.

The goddess Tanit, although her full title 'Pene Baal' meant '(Tanit) Face of Baal', seems to have had precedence over Baal Hammon, with whom she was often associated. Tanit was undoubtedly the Carthaginian counterpart of the Phoenician fertility goddess Astarte, for the latter does not appear independently of Tanit in the Carthaginian area. In Roman Carthage, Tanit was identified with Juno Caelestis, which indicates that she was also associated with the heavens. The crescent and the disc naturally suggest her connection with the moon. The emblem of the hand, with palm turned outwards, probably symbolizes protection and benediction, and anticipates the famous Islamic amulet of the 'Hand of Fatima'. But essentially mysterious is the 'sign of Tanit', which could be interpreted as a schematic figure of the goddess with arms raised in blessing, or as a Carthaginian transformation of the ankh, the Egyptian sign of life.

Centuries of Child Sacrifice

One of the most significant but sinister discoveries made on the site of Punic Carthage was that of the 'topheth' within the precinct of Tanit. The Hebrew word *topheth* occurs in an account of the reforms carried out by King Josiah at Jerusalem (2 Kings 23.10): 'And he defiled Topheth . . . that no one might burn his son or his daughter as an offering to Molech'. It used to be thought that 'Molech' was a Phoenician god, but recent research suggests that it was a term for child sacrifice practised in Canaanite-Phoenician religion. The topheth of Tanit has provided grim evidence of the longevity of the rite at Carthage, in fact from the 8th century BC to the Roman destruction of the city in 146 BC. Thousands of urns were found there containing the calcined bones of small children and birds and small animals – these latter were possibly substitute sacrifices. Small stelae, marking the burial places of the urns, mostly had dedications to Tanit Pene Baal and Baal Hammon. The purpose of these child sacrifices was probably either propitiatory or to promote fertility.

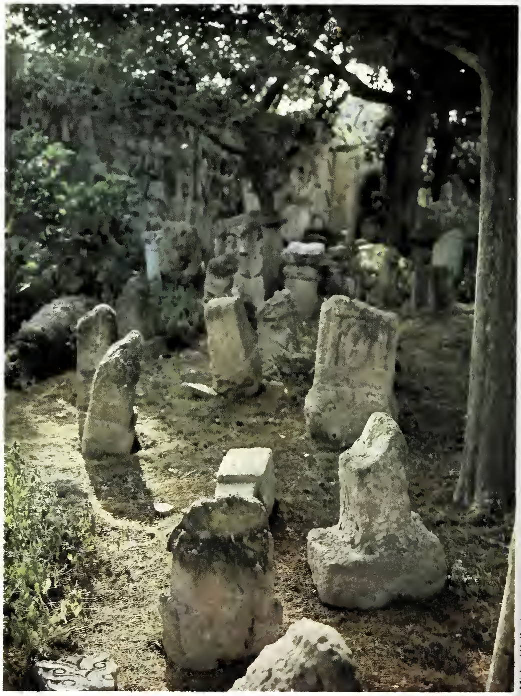
Among other Phoenician gods worshipped at Carthage were Eshmun of Sidon and Reshef. The cult of the Greek goddesses Demeter and Persephone was introduced in the 4th century BC, and after the Roman conquest the Punic deities were generally identified with the Roman deities deemed to be equivalent in character and status. The grim fanaticism that characterized both Phoenician and Carthaginian religion has been thought by some scholars to have left its impress upon ancient African Christianity.

S. G. F. BRANDON

FURTHER READING: M. Edey, *The Sea Traders* (Time-Life, 1974); J.C. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Attic Press, 1978); J. Gray, *The Canaanites* (Praeger, 1964); D. Harden, *The Phoenicians* (Praeger, 1962); S. Moscati, *The World of the Phoenicians* (Praeger, 1968).

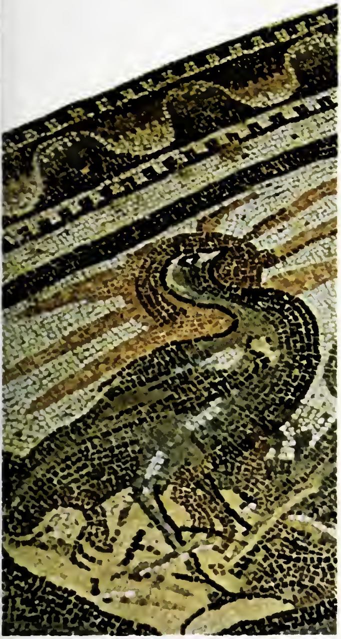
A significant and sinister discovery on the site of Punic Carthage was the 'topheth' in the precinct of the goddess Tanit (*left*), where small children had been sacrificed by burning, perhaps to appease the gods or for fertility. Their bones were placed in urns and small stelae mark the burying places of these urns in graveyards (*right*), frequently dedicated to Baal Hammon and Tanit Pene Baal, the chief Carthaginian deities

Michael Holford



Michael Holford

PHOENIX


Axel Poignant

The priests of Heliopolis maintained that the phoenix arrived from Arabia every 500 years, bearing its predecessor embalmed in a ball of myrrh: phoenix on a Sicilian mosaic

FOR A MYTHICAL CREATURE, the phoenix is familiar enough; it is used in everyday life as a trademark, it rises from stylized flames on heraldic bearings, it enriches the poet's language, and appears briefly in history. What its legend is and means, on the other hand, has largely been forgotten as the symbol gains wider and wider currency.

The phoenix, according to the most developed forms of the story, is a bird about the size of an eagle, brilliantly coloured in plumage; it is either purple with a golden collar, or a dazzling mixture of red, gold and blue. It is the only one of its kind, and lives in Arabia; at the end of an epoch, as it feels death drawing near, it builds a pyre of the sweetest spices, on which it then sits, singing a song of rare beauty. The rays of the sun ignite the nest, and both this and the bird are consumed to ashes. From the ashes there arises a worm, which eventually grows into a new phoenix. The bird's first task is to gather the remains of its parent and, accompanied by a throng of other birds, to fly to Heliopolis (the City of the Sun) on the Nile. Here the priests of the sun receive it with great ceremony; it buries its parent in the temple, and returns to Arabia.

The roots of this story first appear in ancient Greek literature, in Herodotus's account of Egypt (c 430 BC). When he was at Heliopolis, he was shown the bird in pictures; and its very name may be due to his confusing it with the date palm on which it is often depicted, which is also *phoenix* in Greek. It was a red-gold bird about the size of an eagle, and the priests said that it arrived there every 500 years bearing its predecessor embalmed in a ball of myrrh, which it buried in the temple of the sun. Later writers give other details, such as the bird's rebirth as a worm from its dead parent's body, and the accompanying flight of birds. There was, however, some doubt as to the length of the true interval between the arrival of two phoenixes: Aelian (c 170–235 AD) mocks the priests who do not know when it will arrive and 'have to confess that they devote their time "to putting the sun to rest with their talk", but do not know as much as birds'. Tacitus reports: 'Regarding the length of its life, accounts vary. The commonest view favours 500 years. But some estimate that it appears every 1461 years . . .' The particular phoenix which had come to his attention as a historian was that said to have arrived in the reign of Tiberius; but since the previous one had been welcomed at Heliopolis under Ptolemy III, and 'as between Ptolemy and Tiberius there were less than 250 years some have denied the authenticity of the Tiberian phoenix, which did not, they say, come from Arabia or perform the traditionally attested actions.' Pliny rejects it out of hand; although it was displayed in public, 'nobody would doubt that this phoenix is a fabrication'.

It is only in the 4th century AD that the idea of a fiery death is to be found, in two complete poems on the phoenix, by Claudian and Lactantius. This description of the bird's death is taken from Claudian, in Henry Vaughan's translation:

> He knows his time is out! and doth provide
> New principles of life; herbs he brings dried
> From the hot hills, and with rich spices frames
> A Pile shall burn, and Hatch him with his flames.
> On this the weakling sits; salutes the Sun
> With pleasant noise, and prays and begs for some
> Of his own fire, that quickly may restore
> The youth and vigour, which he had before.
> Whom soon as Phoebus spyes, stopping his rayns
> He makes a stand, and thus allayes his pains . . .
> He shakes his locks, and from his golden head,
> Shoots one bright beam, which smites with vital fire
> The willing bird; to burn is his desire,
> That he may live again; he's proud in death,
> And goes in haste to gain a better breath.
> The spicie heap fir'd with celestial rays
> Doth burn the aged Phoenix, when strait stays
> The Chariot of th'amazed Moon; the pole
> Resists the wheeling, swift Orbs, and the whole
> Fabric of Nature at a stand remains,
> Till the old bird a new, young being gains.

With this superb description of the traditional death of the phoenix, our picture of the legend is complete. Where did such a tale come from, and are its details part of the clues as to its origin or mere decoration? Herodotus's account of the phoenix as a sacred bird at Heliopolis sets us in the right direction: for in the Egyptian mythological texts, such as the Book of the Dead, which are concerned with the soul's safety in the otherworld and are often magical and obscure, the bird *bn.w* or bennu appears, with many of the attributes of the phoenix. This creature is one of the prime movers of the world: prototype of the individual soul, it arises from the Isle of Fire in the underworld and flies to Heliopolis to announce the new epoch, in which the sun itself is renewed. Because the sun, too, had been envisaged as a bird which made its daily journey from east to west, so the bennu came to be identified with Khepera (Khepri) himself, the rising sun.

Companion of the Sun

The texts on the bennu itself fall into three groups: those concerned with resurrection, those identifying it with Re-Osiris and the rites of the dead, and those identifying it with the planet Venus. The three groups are linked by the solar theme, and a new idea of the bennu appears, as a bird accompanying the sun on its daily journey. In the Apocalypse of Baruch (2nd century AD), Baruch is shown by an angel the sun as it sets out on its daily journey, accompanied by the phoenix, 'a bird as large as nine mountains'; and at twilight the same procession returns. The phoenix is weary, 'Because he holds back the rays of the sun, because of the fire and heat which last throughout the day . . . if his wings did not form a screen against the rays of the sun, no living being would survive.' This legend reappears in a slightly different form in the story of the bird called heliodromos or 'sun-runner', and other variations linger in the medieval descriptions of the phoenix.

In the Egyptian texts, the bennu is shown as a heron-like creature, which does not correspond to the eagle-like bird described by Herodotus; but it is possible that the original bennu was a falcon-like creature which was only later confused with the heron. Its colouring, gold, red, pink and blue, is that of the phoenix. Among the few details of its habits, we learn of the flight of birds which escort it at a respectful distance; perhaps a simile for the stars following Venus at eventide. A sarcophagus bears the inscription 'I am the bennu who begets himself and gives incense to Osiris.' The identification with Osiris, the god of resurrection, which is found elsewhere, strengthens the idea of the bennu as self-reviving. Finally, the bennu is associated with the new epoch or great year in the same way as the phoenix. The cycle of 1461 days (Tacitus's 'years' is an error) is exactly the length of four solar years including Leap Year day. All in all, there can be little doubt that the phoenix of Herodotus and classical tradition is indeed the same creature as the bennu of Egyptian myth.

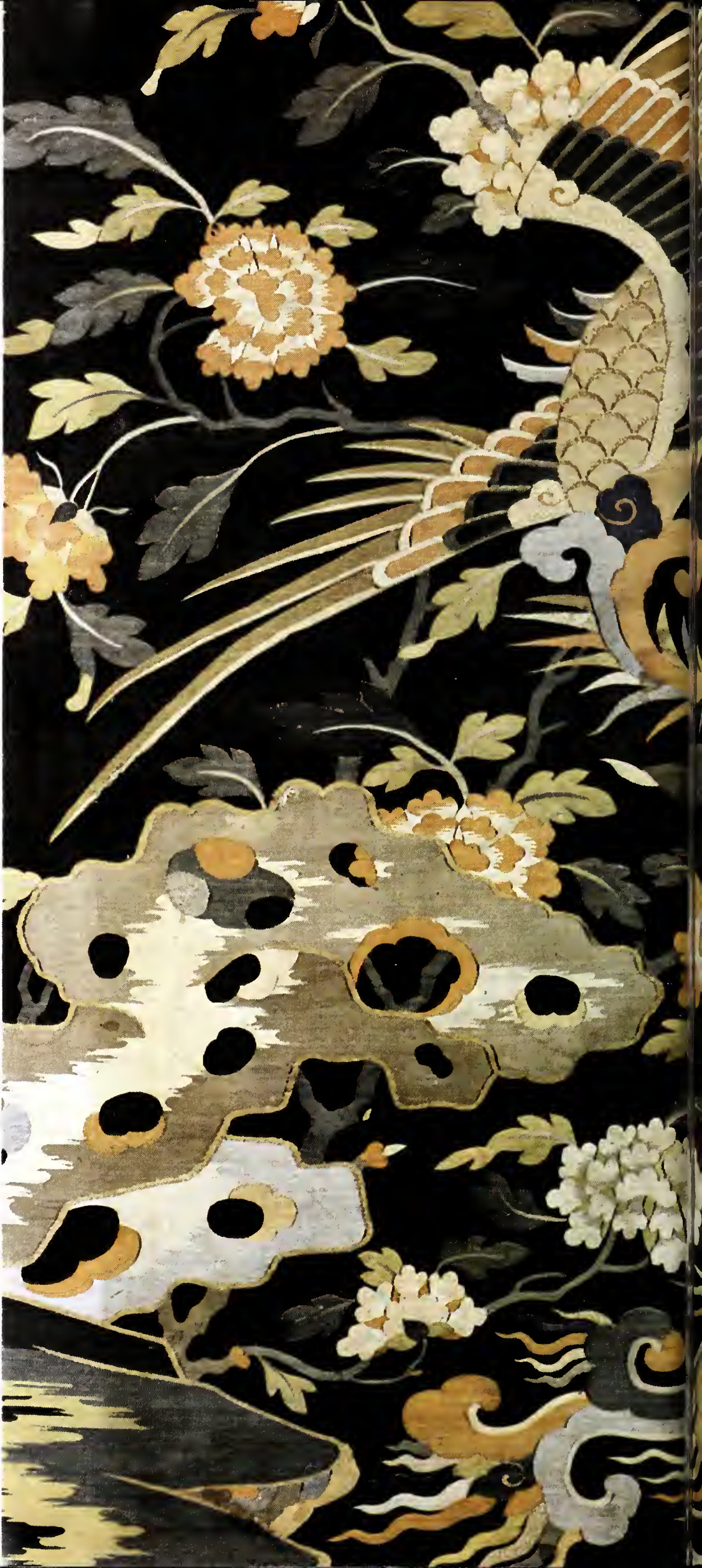
Yet even the bennu's solar associations are not quite enough to account for the strange phenomenon of the phoenix's fiery end. Here a modern naturalist comes to our aid: Dr Maurice Burton, in his researches into the habit of 'anting' has pointed out the parallel between this and the resurrection in flames of the phoenix. In 'anting', which is common among various species including rooks, the bird performs a series of almost ritual movements, often involving glowing cinders or actual flaming twigs, which give the impression that it is using fire and smoke to drive ants out of its feathers. Closer investigation shows that this is not the case, and the real reason for this behaviour is unknown. However, a bird emerging from the flames in this way might easily suggest revival by fire. The only weakness in this theory is that the habit has not so far been observed in any of the prototypes of the bennu and phoenix: eagle, heron and falcon.

Death in a Nest of Spice

The legend of the phoenix was widespread in the Middle Ages: but medieval curiosity about the natural world was limited. Accepted authority was preferred, and the authority on bird and animal lore was the work known as the *Physiologus* or Naturalist. This small collection of descriptions was steadily enlarged between the 6th and 13th centuries and became known as the bestiary or Book of Beasts. The most important change was that the original text was turned into a moral tract by the addition of an explanation in theological terms of the natural events. The entry for the phoenix, as expected, reminds us of the Resurrection. First the version by which it meets a fiery end is given, and is used as an argument for the truth of the scriptural account of the Passion: 'If the Phoenix has the power to die and rise again, why, silly man, are you scandalised at the word of God . . .?' The alternative version is then given (ignoring the contradiction), according to which the bird's body decays in a nest of spices and a worm emerges to grow into a new phoenix.

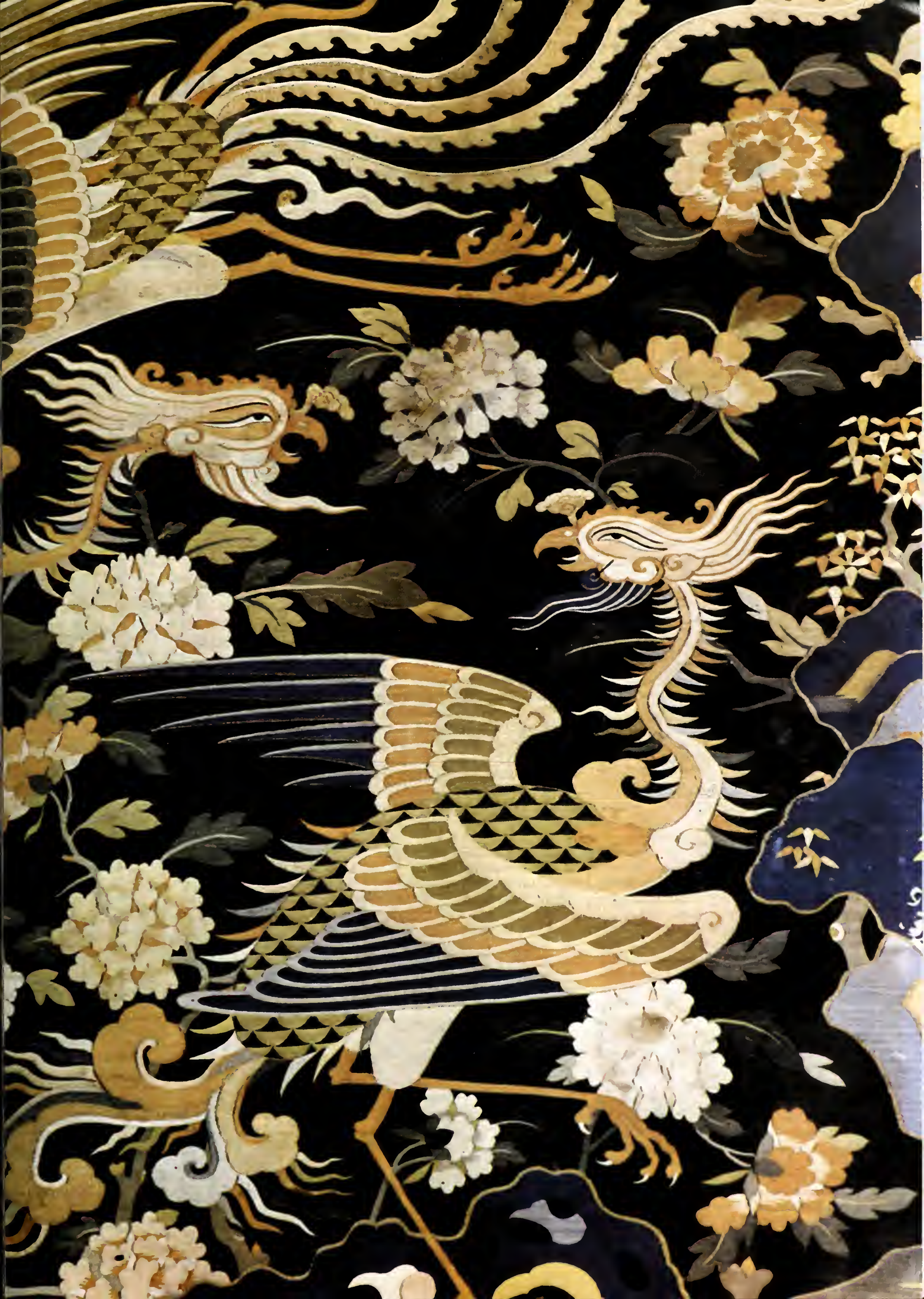
The bestiary was very popular, and many variations developed, both orthodox and unorthodox. In one version, the phoenix is confused with the eagle, but the most interesting is that of the bestiary of the heretical Waldensian sect that flourished in France and Italy in the 12th century. This revives an aspect of the legend which was rarely touched on: the phoenix's sweet song on its pyre, which was taken to symbolize man's duty to praise God. Although this fable is very like that of the swan that sang so beautifully before it died, it is a very old attribute of the phoenix, and found in Roman writers. In the most unusual of all the bestiaries, the 'Lovers' Book of Beasts', the phoenix masquerades as a salamander, and can only be identified by the illustration, which shows it as a bird.

From theology, the phoenix migrates to literature. The cold sceptical eye of the 17th century ejected it from the canon of natural history, but poets, seized on it as an exotic symbol of the unique – which quickly became debased to the merely rare – and phoenixes abound in their eulogies of



Pair of phoenixes on a Chinese tapestry: renowned for its song, the Chinese phoenix is a heavenly emissary which appears when the land enjoys the gods' favour

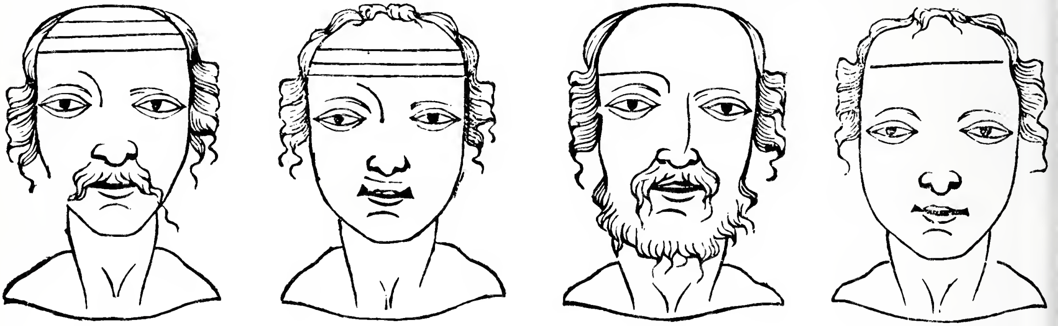
Victoria and Albert Museum/Michael Holford



monarchs and other great men of the world, and in the lines inspired by the great beauties of the day. In this century, W. B. Yeats, thinking of his love Maud Gonne, could revive the myth's magic as he scorned 'a score of duchesses surpassing womankind' for her sake, saying 'I knew a phoenix in my youth, so let them have their day.' Florian, the 18th century French writer of fables, gave the myth a new charm by placing it in a homely setting. One day the phoenix appears in the forests of France, where all the birds are overcome with envy and admiration – all, that is, save the turtledove; she sighs as she gazes at the phoenix, and when her mate asks her the reason for this, answers: 'I can only pity him; he is the only one of his kind.' On a more complex and subtle plane are two symbolic recreations of the legend in poems by Sidney Keyes and Herbert Read. In Keyes' poem, the phoenix stands for corrupting pride, while in sharp contrast Read sees it as an archetype of life's continuation.

Outside this Western tradition there is the Chinese phoenix. As with the bennu bird, the equation between *feng-hwang* and phoenix is not absolute. The feng-hwang is not unique: feng is the male bird, hwang the female. But in other respects it resembles the Western phoenix. It is renowned for its sweet song and is accompanied by crowds of birds. It is a heavenly emissary which appears when the land enjoys the gods' favour, and is not seen in times of war, just as in Roman Egypt the phoenix was a good omen. The idea of the rarity of the bird is complicated by reports that if you play the flute, almost invariably the creature will appear to accompany you, and when friends gather in a garden in the cool of the evening to play music together, it will often join them. The feng-hwang, however, is really part of the otherworld, as one of the four spiritual creatures, symbol of the empress and of the element fire. It bears on its body the characters for virtue, righteousness, humanity, sincerity and integrity; it will eat no living thing, not even grass; and of all four spiritual creatures – tortoise, *ki-lin* (unicorn), dragon and feng-hwang – it is the feng-hwang which is the most exalted.

RICHARD BARBER



Two scholars were hounded from their own country for suggesting that man's physical constitution determined his character; the phrenologists limited their investigations to the head while physiognomists extended their study to the whole body

PHRENOLOGY & PHYSIOGNOMY

A MAN considered to have 'shifty eyes', 'a suspicious manner' or 'an arrogant walk' may on these counts be assessed and judged by others, for it seems natural to believe that from the outer we can tell the inner man. Even modern scientists contend that they can classify human beings according to physical type and that each physical category possesses a distinct set of behavioural characteristics. The forerunners of these more objective methods of assessing character by studying physique were phrenology and physiognomy.

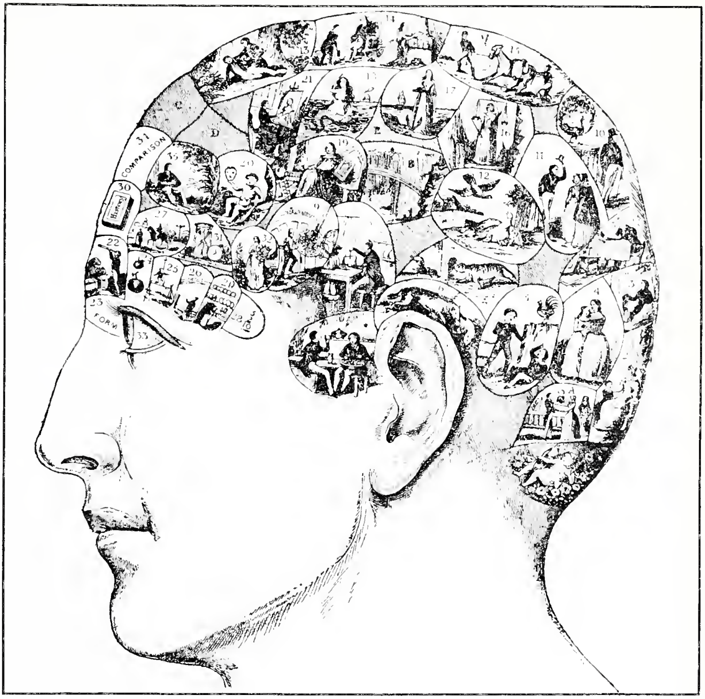
Phrenology holds that a man's character is determined by the interaction of various organs of the brain, all of which have a specific physical location in the head. The size of these organs can be detected by a trained phrenologist from the shape of the skull: by feeling a certain area of the cranium the expert can tell, for example, how well developed is his subject's 'organ of combativeness'; in this way he can decide whether his is a passive or an aggressive personality. Physiognomy extends the principle of assessing human personality according to physical indices to the entire man – the formation of any part of the body might tell the physiognomist about the man beneath.

At the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, when new 'sciences' like that of mesmerism (see MESMER) mushroomed overnight, such means of 'weighing' mankind attracted the attention of dedicated investigators. Both phrenology and physiognomy owed some part of their 19th century vogue to the publication of the *Physiognomical Fragments* of J. K. Lavater, a Swiss divine who saw in the human body the reflection of the soul within (see LAVATER). It was phrenology, however, which caught the popular imagination, and the founder of 'that science teeming with the amelioration of society and the happiness of the species' was a natural scientist, whose science was the centre of strenuous conflict, seeming as it did to overturn the accepted version of man's place in the universe.

Franz Joseph Gall (1758–1828) and his disciple J. K. Spurzheim (1776–1832) demonstrated in themselves the conflict which took place between what appeared to be the claims of pure science and those of inherited belief. During the 1790s Gall was so fashionable a physician in Vienna that he could afford to turn down the post of doctor to the Emperor's court. At this period his mind – like that of Mesmer before him – turned to speculations of his student days. Gradually he evolved his personal theories of human nature, assisted after 1804 by Spurzheim. They linked their investigations into the construction of the brain to speculations about the springs of human conduct. Gradually, the various 'organs' of phrenology were discovered by more or less arbitrary means. For example, Gall located his 'organ of self-esteem' by examining the head of a beggar who blamed his pride for reducing him to poverty. In Gall's system, 33 organs were located in the head – Spurzheim was to add a further four – and all were given names and numbers. There were said to be three classes of organs: those controlling basic characteristics; those governing 'sentiments' like benevolence and mirthfulness; and a class of purely intellectual capacities, such as the ability to measure size or appreciate the sequence of cause and effect. The phrenologists' conclusions were summed up in a poem called *The Craniad*, published in 1817:

> In every human character 'there be'
> Organs and faculties full thirty-three
> Distinct in kinds, and differing in extent –
> But natural, constant, marked and
> permanent.
> Within some heads they're large, – in others
> small,
> But all possess them, and possess them all.
> They act in various ways, – alone, combined,
> And hence the varied character of *mind*.

Before Gall and Spurzheim there had been several attempts to localize the functions of the brain. Galen and his followers had taught that the brain was the seat of the soul; and in the early 13th century Albertus Magnus had divided the skull into three segments, giving to the forehead the control of judgement, to the top of the skull that of imagination, and placing that of memory in the back of the head. But the more specific formulations of Gall and Spurzheim caused consternation: in 1802 Gall's lectures were banned, and three years later the pair were forced to leave Austria. They spent some time travelling round Europe expounding their theories, and eventually settled in Paris, where in 1808 they presented a memorandum to the French Institute and in 1810 began jointly to publish their *Anatomy and Physiology of the Nervous System*. Soon after the publication of the first volume, Spurzheim broke with Gall, who remained in Paris, and began to concentrate his energies on the English-speaking world.



In the 16th century Jerome Cardan maintained that personality could be judged from the lines on the forehead *Facing page* (*left to right*) Heads of a peaceful and successful man, a quarrelsome and murderous man, an infirm man, and a man of prowess in war; from the *Metoposcopa* by Cardan *Above* Phrenological diagram of the areas of the head in which character traits and mental abilities are located: for example, contrariness in section 12, benevolence in section 13

Mary Evans Picture Library

Undermining God's Role

Why were two respected men of learning hounded out of their home country and forced to become wandering scholars? The answer lies in the shattering implications of Gall's theories if applied consistently to human affairs. He argued without equivocation that a man's physical constitution determined his character. The view of human nature which this implied was both elitist and profoundly pessimistic. It was not an attitude calculated to endear him either to those interested in upholding the powers of God over man or to the Romantic panegyricists of human reason who flourished in Gall's lifetime. On the other hand, Spurzheim was responsible for popularizing the doctrines of his master, and in so doing presented a more rosy picture of human nature than did the austere Gall.

Their different approaches were noted by a follower of Spurzheim, who wrote that Gall 'visited the prisons, the hospitals, the schools and the churches of Vienna; and he found organs which he did not hesitate to name as the organs of *theft*, *murder* and *cunning*, *benevolence* and *religion*. He considered the actions of men, whether good or evil, as necessarily flowing from the organization they received from nature, without adverting to the primitive power their organs were designed to exercise in a healthy and unvitiated state . . . Spurzheim had the merit of pointing out the primitive powers of the different organs, and discriminating between the institutions of God and the *abuses* of those institutions.' In other words, for Spurzheim's followers, man was essentially a divine creation, and phrenology revealed the physical embodiment of God's laws which all must follow to earn divine approval. The fear that man might prove neither to be the arbiter of his own destiny nor the privileged creature of a Supreme Being was lifted. It was even argued that the cranial 'organs' would be improved by leading an exemplary life; phrenology was extolled as an infallible means of judging men and visions of phrenological Utopias, in which a man's suitability for high office could be scientifically assessed, passed into common currency.

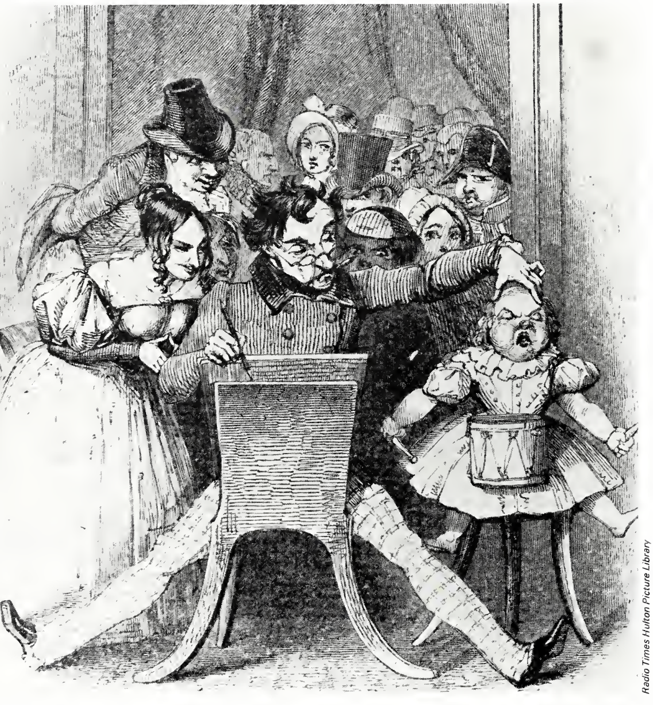
This was a far cry from the original theories of Gall, whom Metternich thought the greatest mind he had ever known, and whose honesty was such that he left sections of his brain charts blank, because he had not yet discovered what faculties they controlled. Spurzheim's messianic version of phrenology found a ready-made place in the welter of mesmerism, Spiritualism and Utopian social theories which passed popularly for 'progressive thought' in the mid-19th century. The process of popularizing began in Scotland, where the hard-headed medical man employed by the *Edinburgh Review* to castigate Spurzheim's work was alarmed by the speedy appearance of the foreign savant in the Scottish capital. Spurzheim publicly dissected a brain and began to make converts. He also found time to record a phrenological assessment of the Scots (the words in italics denote phrenological 'organs'): 'Scotland contains several races of inhabitants. The genuine highlanders are *entire feelings*: accordingly, I would consider them as the warmest friends, or the most dangerous enemies, always acting by strong feelings. They have *adhesiveness*, *combativeness*, *destructiveness*, *secretiveness*, *self-esteem*, *approbation*, *firmness* and *individuality* strong: many have *cautiousness*. The upper part of the forehead is mostly narrow, *tune* is good – *order* is almost wanting . . .'

Through the efforts of Spurzheim's supporters, notably the Scottish advocate George Coombe, phrenological societies sprang up throughout the United Kingdom. By the 1830s there were at least a dozen British societies; over 60 books and pamphlets were in circulation, and the cause was attracting large financial bequests. George Coombe proved an active successor to Spurzheim after the latter's death in 1832 whilst on a visit to Harvard University. As one ardent phrenologist wrote at the time: 'Philosopher after Philosopher, Phrenologist after Phrenologist may die – but Phrenology *can never perish* – IT IS EVERLASTING, LIKE THE OTHER TRUTHS OF GOD.' Indeed Coombe's celebrity eclipsed that of Spurzheim: Victoria and Albert had him examine the heads of the royal children. But it was in America that Coombe's propaganda bore the most remarkable fruit.

In Europe phrenologists remained devoted to lecturing and exposition. But in America there arose a legion of 'practical' phrenologists, who functioned as psychiatrists and witch-doctors when they were not simple travelling showmen, combining phrenology with mesmerism and salesmanship. One practitioner exhibited a giant and a dwarf as added attractions. Another was 'His Royal Highness Prince Luximon Ray, M.D.', who distributed the 'Grand Hindoo Poetical Chart'. On a slightly higher level, American phrenology was represented by the Fowler brothers, publishers of all manner of 'advanced' literature. An alliance with mesmerism begot 'phrenomagnetism', a method of healing in which the operator placed his hand on the particular phrenological organ he wished to influence and exerted his 'mesmeric' power. Certain vehement phrenologists claimed their speciality as the road to complete health.

Phrenology has left its mark in surprising places. Its supporters have included the poets Walt Whitman and Edgar Allan Poe and the biologist Alfred Russel Wallace; and when Darwin wrote *The Origin of Species* he acknowledged a phrenological work published in 1845 called *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* as a source of inspiration. This apparently unlikely line of descent suggests that the underlying message of phrenology was contained in Gall's original insight, which was easily forgotten beneath the pile of later accretions but was the reason for the conflict between the phrenologists and their opponents. Gall believed that the mind of man himself could be studied through the newly-evolving techniques of rationalist science, and that objectivity must be attempted with regard to man's place in the cosmos as much as in the study of newts. In this way, Gall's stumblings in the dark have proved to be the forerunner of experimental psychology.

This 19th century cartoon reflects the widespread popularity of phrenology; Queen Victoria had the heads of the Royal children examined, and it was hoped that through phrenology a man's suitability for leadership and high position could be assessed



Radio Times Hulton Picture Library

Physiognomy has bequeathed a similar legacy. Unlike phrenology, physiognomy was never an organized movement, although the physiognomical works of Lavater enjoyed a wide public throughout the 19th century. But it was not until Mary Olmsted Stanton published her *System of Practical and Scientific Physiognomy* in 1890 that the aspiring physiognomist had anything resembling a system to follow. Mary Stanton's vast work – from which virtually all subsequent physiognomical systems are derived – betrays its debts to the phrenologists in its preoccupation with the structure of the head. Around 40 phrenological 'organs' are recognized, and a dozen more located. But Mary Stanton goes further than her predecessors; an 'organ' might be correctly identified, but this 'organ' is itself produced by the physical functioning of the body. Thus the kidney system evolves the 'organs' of conscientiousness, integrity and morality. The immense complications of such theorizing probably account for the relative lack of interest in 'Scientific Physiognomy', which constantly degenerates into the arbitrary application of adjectives to parts of the body.

The 20th century has seen a revival of serious scientific interest in the possible effects of physique on character. In 1921 the psychologist Ernst Kretschmer published a study of a group of mentally abnormal people in which he attempted to correlate their physical structure with the type of their mental disease. More recently William Sheldon has divided humanity into three broad categories of physical type – 'ectomorphs', 'mesomorphs' and 'endomorphs' – of which each group exhibits broadly similar traits of personality. It is interesting that this classification corresponds to that made made by some phrenologists into 'mental', 'motive' and 'vital' types. The verdict of present-day science on phrenology and physiognomy must remain a mixture of acclaim and criticism.

J. C. N. WEBB

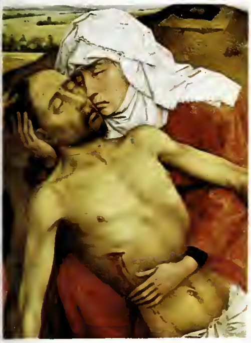
PICATRIX

A FAMOUS 11th century Arabic magical compendium is commonly known by the corrupt title *Picatrix*. The Islamic magical tradition was largely based upon much earlier Hellenistic Greek sources. Thus when *Picatrix* and similar Arabic works reached the West, mainly by way of Latin translations made by Moorish scholars in Spain during the 10th and 11th centuries, elements of the ancient Hellenistic Greek civilization returned by an indirect route. *Picatrix* and other compilations of the same kind were avidly studied by the important hermetic scholars who flourished during the Renaissance era, including Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Johannes Trithemius and Cornelius Agrippa.

All this would be of merely antiquarian interest were it not for the fact that the innocent little books that are still being published about 'Your Lucky Birth Stone' owe something, although very remotely, to works such as *Picatrix*. Books of this kind and, in particular, popular astrological publications reflect the survival of beliefs current even before the Christian era.

Until the invention of printing in the 15th century works like *Picatrix* only survived in the form of a limited number of manuscript copies. The availability of printing led to the dissemination of countless works belonging to the near or distant past. However, the reputation of *Picatrix* was so black that it was never printed even in Latin, let alone in a vernacular tongue, in hermetism's heyday during the Renaissance. Indeed, the text of *Picatrix* has not been available in any modern language until its publication in Germany in 1962.

Picatrix certainly contains a vast lore relating to esoteric cosmology, astrology, the preparation of talismans and the necessary incantations to make them effective, also those prescribed for the worship of planetary spirits, but it is all expressed in a highly-obscure and jumbled manner. Hence the work is of greater interest to cultural historians than to modern occultists.



National Gallery/Michael Holford

Pieta

In Christian art, a representation of the Virgin Mary holding the dead body of Christ after it had been taken down from the cross; portraying Mary's grief for her dead son and contrasting with the image of the Virgin and child.

Pietism

Generally, a religious attitude which stresses emotion and behaviour rather than intellect, a tendency to regard depth of feeling and personal devotion as more important than creeds and doctrines: specifically, a movement organized by Philipp Jakob Spener, a German Lutheran, from c1670, often derided for what was regarded as its excessive and affected piety.

PIG

SINCE IT PROVIDES the staple food of many peoples but is the tabooed flesh of others, the pig occupies the paradoxical position of being both loved and loathed at the same time, if not in the same place. It was first domesticated by the Chinese and later at an unknown date by the English and other European communities. The European variety is descended from the wild boar, modified by crossing with Asiatic breeds, and has inherited some of the occult qualities of its turbulent ancestor (see BOAR).

The domestic pig has never ranked very highly in popular esteem, for not only is it the Buddhist symbol of indolence and the European symbol of licence, but to the ordinary mind it represents gluttony and obstinacy. Yet the pig is undoubtedly a noble animal and was deservedly an object of worship in Crete, while in Greece it was sacrificed to the gods at the time of the planting of the corn.

In ancient Egypt the pig represented the spirit of Osiris at sowing time and the spirit of Seth at the harvest. It was regarded as unclean, and the swineherds who attended it were not allowed to enter a temple and not permitted to marry outside their own ranks. Pig meat was eaten by the Egyptians only at the Midwinter feast, and the pig could only be sacrificed at the full moon. As a possible relic of this tradition there are those who still believe that a pig must be slaughtered when the moon is waxing or otherwise it will shrink in the pot.

British Museum/Michael Holford

Egyptian green glazed model of a sow and her piglets: the pig is an uncanny animal and often the subject of taboos. In northern Europe pork was the food of kingly hospitality and the otherworld feast but Jews and Arabs consider it unclean meat, for reasons lost in the past

The eating of pig is taboo to both Jew and Arab and it was also long out of favour in Scotland and in parts of northern Ireland. One possible explanation for this custom is that the pig had originally been the symbol of a social group – its totem – and was regarded as the tribal ancestor: thus to eat a sacred pig could be fatal to the interests of the tribe. A further reason for the prohibition of certain kinds of food is the belief that one becomes what one eats. The fastidious individual who accepts the doctrine that one assimilates the habits of the pig by eating pork is naturally disinclined to adopt this type of diet.

In the past, both Hebrew and Arab have been prepared to accept martyrdom rather than eat pork and in 16th century Spain anyone with a distaste for this meat stood in permanent danger of arrest by the Spanish Inquisition as a secret adherent of Judaism. His Catholic Majesty Philip II of Spain gave signal proof of Christian orthodoxy during the period he lived in England by consuming vast quantities of

A Gift for the Beast

A group of boys stranded on an island sense an unknown menace and offer a pig's head to it

He paused and stood up, looking at the shadows under the trees. His voice was lower when he spoke again.

"But we'll leave part of the kill for . . ."

He knelt down again and was busy with his knife. The boys crowded round him. He spoke over his shoulder to Roger.

"Sharpen a stick at both ends."

Presently he stood up, holding the dripping sow's head in his hands.

"Where's that stick?"

"Here."

"Ram one end in the earth. Oh – it's rock. Jam it in that crack. There."

Jack held up the head and jammed the soft throat down on the pointed end of the stick which pierced through into the mouth. He stood back and the head hung there, a little blood dribbling down the stick.

Instinctively the boys drew back too; and the forest was very still. They listened, and the loudest noise was the buzzing of flies over the spilled guts.

Jack spoke in a whisper.

"Pick up the pig."

Maurice and Robert skewered the carcass, lifted the dead weight, and stood ready. In the silence, and standing over the dry blood, they looked suddenly furtive.

Jack spoke loudly.

"This head is for the beast. It's a gift."

The silence accepted the gift and awed them. The head remained there, dim-eyed, grinning faintly, blood blackening between the teeth. All at once they were running away, as fast as they could, through the forest towards the open beach.

William Golding *Lord of the Flies*

bacon, as a result of which he became ill.

To the Celts and Teutonic peoples pork was the food of kingly hospitality and otherworld feasts. Both the Anglo-Saxons and the conquering Norman aristocrats enjoyed pork; evidence of the popularity of the pig as food among all English classes in the past. But never has the pig had more eloquent a champion than the writer Charles Lamb who declared in his *Essays of Elia*: 'There is no flavour comparable I will contend to that of the crisp, tawny, well watched not overroasted crackling'. Pork was customarily served at Christmas time in England in the past. At Queen's College, Oxford, a boar's head with an orange in its mouth is traditionally brought to the table with great ceremony at the season of goodwill. A similar custom is observed in Scandinavia at Yule, when a loaf made from the last sheaf of the harvest is baked in the shape of a boar.

Hunted and Tortured

Christian teaching has allocated a conflicting role for the pig, in that it represents the principles of both good and evil. St Anthony was the patron saint of swineherds: to him young pigs were sometimes dedicated, and even today the smallest pig of the litter is called a 'Tantony pig'. On the other hand the pig has become a token of evil largely due to the accounts in the New Testament of demons expelled by Christ from their human abode immediately entering the bodies of the Gadarene swine. The whole situation remains complex, because the pig could be either the personification of Satan or, alternatively, his victim. The Black Boar, one of the less familiar of the Devil's guises, occurs in the folklore of New England and Ireland.

Demon pigs were familiar to English peasant life; the two best-known examples being the Winwick and Burnley pigs of Lancashire, whose effigies may be seen carved on the walls of the respective parish churches. The pig was extremely vulnerable to the Evil Eye and it was as the victim of diabolical assault that it occupied a place in the annals of English witchcraft. Arising from some confusion of the old idea of torturing a witch by remote control through her victim, and the doctrine that by sacrificing a living animal it would be possible to save the others, a sick pig was actually burned alive in Huntingdon in 1833, and in Lincolnshire it was once the custom to score the back of a living pig with red-hot poker to preserve the remainder of the litter.

The pig fared equally badly at the hands of medieval lawyers. Inspired by the Law of Moses which decreed: 'When an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall be stoned and its flesh shall not be eaten', a sow and her young pigs were condemned to death in 1457, the piglets receiving a last minute pardon 'due to their extreme youth'.

Though taboo in some parts of the world, pigs in New Guinea are used for food, sacrifice, decoration and protection *Below left* Tribesman with a pig token round his neck returns from the pig exchange *Below right* Chimbu man of some importance wears a necklet made of pigs' tails *Bottom* Man from the West Highlands wears a pig token head-dress

Picturepoint, London

Axel Poignant

Picturepoint, London

The pig also fell victim to the huntsman. Until disafforestation caused their extinction, wild boars were hunted for sport by the nobles. Among the English agricultural class pig-racing was long in vogue, and involved a wild chase through the countryside after a pig whose tail had been coated with soap.

Before the publication of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, it was only in the fairground that the intellectual superiority of the pig was recognized. A learned pig was exhibited at St Bartholomew's Fair in the early 18th century, advertised as 'The pig of knowledge, being the only one ever taught in England'.

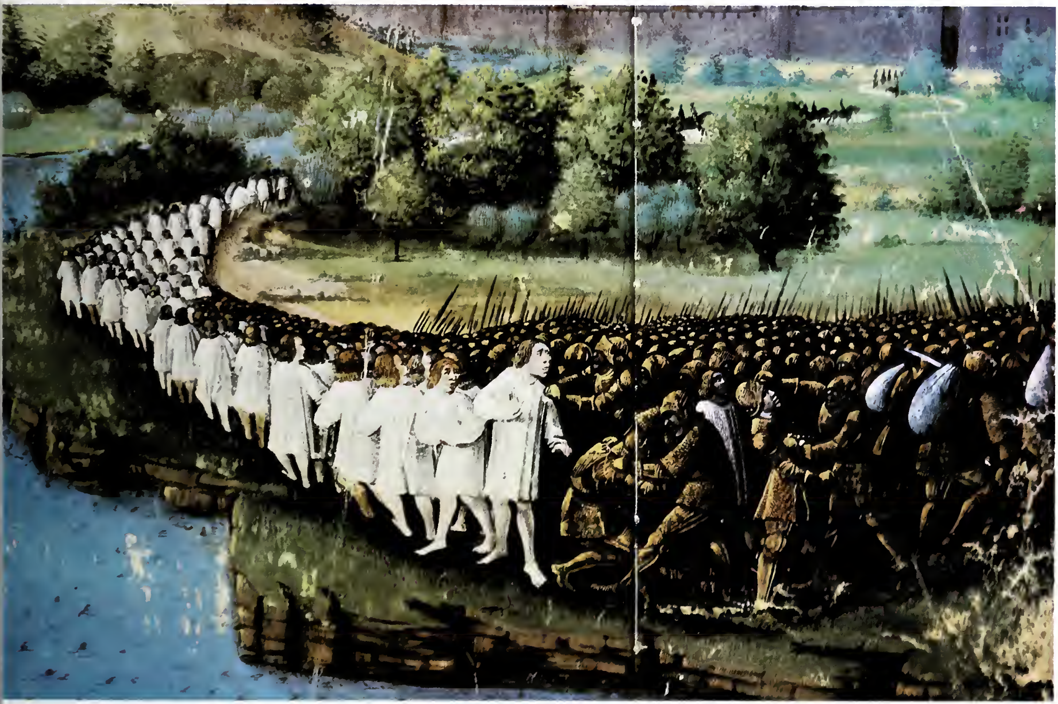
In China and in Europe the pig is a good luck talisman, yet among many fishing communities the animal itself is regarded as extremely unlucky, and even the use of its name is taboo. There are occasional reports of fairy pigs emanating from the Isle of Man, and at Andover in Hampshire a spectral pig is said to be seen on New Year's Eve.

The long-standing association between the pig and the wind is confirmed by the countryman's superstition that a pig has the power either to see or smell the wind and is thus a useful weather prophet. In parts of the United States hogs are supposed to detect the approach of a tornado. It was long a custom in Ireland to drive a pig into the house on May morning for luck, yet oddly enough a pig that enters a house at any other time is an omen of poverty.

ERIC MAPLE

PILGRIMAGE

The Journey To Holiness



Bibliotheque Nationale

Detail from a 15th-century French painting of the People's Crusade, a disastrous mass pilgrimage of 1076, led by Peter the Hermit, to help free the Holy Land from the Moslems

IN THE MOST FAMOUS lines of the *Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer refers to the restless religious longing which overcomes the devout man in spring:

> When the sweet showers of April fall and shoot
> Down through the drought of March to pierce
> the root . . .
> Then people long to go on pilgrimages
> And palmers long to seek the stranger strands
> Of far-off saints, hallowed in sundry lands . .

These words express succinctly a feature of the religious life of man in practically all ages and all parts of the world – the desire to go on a pilgrimage.

The word pilgrim itself is derived from the Latin *peregrinus*, and means simply a wanderer or stranger. Although 'pilgrimage' (*peregrinatio*) means literally no more than 'wandering about', the word has come to mean wandering with a purpose, and a pilgrim is one who temporarily abandons his or her normal pursuits in order to seek the spiritual and moral benefits believed to be obtainable in some particularly holy place. A palmer, on the other hand, was one whose whole life was spent in wandering from place to place.

Wherever there have been holy persons or holy places, there have been pilgrims to visit them. Perhaps the first problem to consider is why some places and some people are regarded as more 'holy' than others. It seems that in the religious history of mankind, the world of men and the world of the supernaturals – gods, spirits, demons, ghosts – have been believed to exist for the most part in parallel. However, there are certain points at which the parallel worlds meet, points at which supernatural power comes, as it were, to a focus. Sometimes the original reason for such belief in the concentration of power is unclear. But certain places – for instance, mountains, caves, rivers and springs – were very early thought of as dwelling-places of the supernaturals, where power was intensified; and when early man worshipped, he did so in

With the catacombs and the tombs of St Peter and St Paul, Rome became, and remains, a great centre of Christian pilgrimage *Right* Crowds flock to St Peter's Square to receive the Pope's blessing

There are certain places which are felt to be points of contact between the natural and supernatural worlds, places where supernatural power comes to a focus and can be most effectively felt by worshippers. One of them is Jerusalem, a holy city to three different religions *Centre right* Christian pilgrims in Jerusalem: 'the Bordeaux pilgrim' is known to have made the journey from France as early as the 4th century *Bottom right* David's tomb

such places. Later, when temples were constructed, they too were thought of as the homes of the gods to which they were dedicated, consecrated by the presence of the deity within them. Holiness – supernatural power – is contagious, and anyone wholly dedicated to the service of a deity partakes of this same quality.

There were also sites at which a deity was believed to have revealed himself or herself, sites connected in some way with holy history, shrines of the great departed and places at which oracles were delivered and interpreted. Any of these might serve to mediate the power of the supernaturals to ordinary people: hence they were sought out, and became places of pilgrimage.

In Search of Merit

The reasons which prompted people to become pilgrims doubtless varied greatly. On the one hand, there was the subjective desire to acquire power, merit and those other benefits (the expiation of past sins, for instance, and the healing of present diseases) which might be held to derive from exposure to the focus of holiness. On the other hand, there was the desire to worship and do reverence to the supernaturals themselves. Yet there were other motives than such purely personal ones. In some religious traditions, pilgrimage might simply be part of one's accepted religious duty; and, although merit might well accrue, the motive was social, rather than personal. Chaucer's pilgrims, for instance, had a collective, as well as an individual, motive for making the journey in spring to the shrine of St Thomas.

In the ancient world, pilgrimages were very often connected with seasonal festivals, and especially with the New Year Festival, or its equivalent, at which atonement was made for the sins of the past year and the world was symbolically renewed for another cycle (see ETERNAL RETURN; NEW YEAR). It is not known exactly who attended such festivals in the ancient Near East – in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Israel – but the later practices of Judaism and Islam make it clear that the custom of visiting holy places, and particularly the great temples, at certain seasons of the year has deep roots. The pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover ceremonies, for example, lasted until the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.

Possibly the longest unbroken tradition of pilgrimage to one particular place is seen in the Moslem pilgrimage to Mecca. In pre-Islamic times the tradition of visiting the Kaaba was already well established, but under Mohammed pilgrimage (*hajj*) was elevated into one of the five pillars of the faith, and it has always been the religious duty of every Moslem who is able to do so to go on pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his or her lifetime (see ISLAM; MECCA).

Elsewhere in the ancient world, old places of pilgrimage now exist only as archeological sites – for instance, the hall in which the Mysteries of Eleusis were once celebrated, near Athens, and the sites of the oracles at Delphi and Dodona (see ELEUSIS; ORACLES). The function of some places of pilgrimage have been radically altered. The great pre-Christian temple at Old Uppsala in Sweden, for example, was once visited by great crowds of pilgrims at the seasonal festivals. In the 12th century the coming of Christianity led to the destruction of the temple with its images of Thor, Odin and Freyr, and the building of a church on its site; but the principal attraction had gone and, soon after, the capital of the Svea kingdom was moved elsewhere – an eloquent testimony to the secular significance of pilgrimage centres.

Release from the Wheel of Rebirth

The Indian sub-continent has a vast number of sacred sites, which Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and others visit as often as circumstances permit. However, for the Hindu there is no qualitative difference between worship at the local shrine and the visit to a particularly important holy place. Worship, to the Hindu, is invariably a matter of individual concern, connected both with the reverence due to the gods or (more usually) the Supreme Being, and with the acquisition of individual merit. Pilgrimage raises both these concerns to a higher level, but does not really change them.

To the Buddhist, although the motive of worship may in theory be unimportant (since Buddhism denies the existence of a Supreme Being and classifies the gods as merely higher forms of universal life), the motive of the acquisition of merit is very much present. For Hindu and Buddhist alike, the gaining of merit leads to an improved status in the individual's next life, and thus ultimately to release from the wheel of rebirth.

Among the holiest of goals for Hindu pilgrimages are the seven great rivers, especially the Ganges (see GANGES); and of the cities on the rivers, probably the best-known is Benares (Varanasi), with its hundreds of temples, large and small, its *ghats* (places where the dead are burned), and its crowds of pilgrims at all times of the year. Every inch of the Ganges is sacred, but none more sacred than the holy places of Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath, situated at the sources of the river's three main branches, the Bhagirathi, Mandakini and Alaknanda.

The great Ganges pilgrimage begins at Hardwar, 'Hari's gate', and passes through Rishikesh, the town of ascetics, to the three sanctuaries. The entire pilgrimage, performed in May, June and July, covers over 600 miles, and although transport is available for much of the way, there remains a good deal which has to be undertaken on foot, often in very difficult conditions. Not so long ago a Western youth who attempted the journey barefoot had to have both feet amputated as a result of frostbite.

Of course, where there are difficulties to be surmounted, this only adds to the merit acquired, as well as serving as a necessary mortification and disciplining of the body. The best-known (though now seldom practised) pilgrim austerity is that which requires the seeker after perfection to measure his length along the entire road.

Other celebrated pilgrim cities of India include Mathura and Vrindaban, connected in legend with the boyhood and youth of the god Krishna, and Dwaraka, where Krishna left the world. Often there is a pilgrim route round the city, the following of which in its entirety (*parikrama*) brings especial merit. At individual shrines, it is common to circle them, keeping the shrine on one's right (*pradaksina*) – a custom which can be paralleled in the Christian West.

Pilgrimages usually take place at festival times, though they may be undertaken whenever the time is auspicious. Certain festivals at certain places, such as Hardwar, Allahabad, Ujjain, Nasik, draw vast crowds, and it has been claimed that the *Kumbh Mela*, held near Allahabad every 12 years, attracts larger crowds than are to be found at any other religious festival anywhere in the world. Another festival is the *Jaggantha* car festival at Puri, where the image of the god, mounted on an enormous car (whence our word 'juggernaut'), is dragged through the streets by worshippers.

Compassion for the World

The Buddha himself neither recommended nor forbade the practice of pilgrimage, but shortly after his death his relics were distributed and placed in monuments (*stupas*), which very soon became centres of pilgrimage. Indeed, the technical term for the first stage in Buddhist ordination (into the order of monks, or *bhikkhus*) is *pabbaja*, meaning 'going forth from the world' or, in a sense, becoming a pilgrim.

Today, the main centre of Buddhist pilgrimage in India is Buddh Gaya, the place at which the Buddha gained enlightenment. Outside India there are many Buddhist shrines, the best-known among them being the Temple of the Tooth – a relic of the Buddha preserved in an inner chamber on a golden lotus flower within nine caskets of gold – in Kandy, Sri Lanka. Also in Sri Lanka is perhaps the most universal of pilgrimage centres, Adam's Peak, with its sacred footprint, believed by Buddhists to be that of the Buddha, by Hindus to be that of Shiva, by Moslems to be that of Adam, and by Christians to be that of St Thomas.

In Christianity, the practice of going on pilgrimage began in the early Church, achieved great popularity in the Middle Ages, and is by no means forgotten – particularly by Catholics – in the modern world. The first goal of Christian pilgrimage was the Holy Land, and especially Jerusalem. Among the earliest records in post-biblical times is that of 'the Bordeaux pilgrim', who went to Jerusalem in 333 AD. Despite political difficulties in gaining access to the holy places (a factor which was one of the causes of the Crusades), the practice has continued to this day, though the modern pilgrim visits all the actual or supposed sites of sacred history, and not just the Holy City.

Grants of Indulgence

As the focus of Christendom shifted from Jerusalem to Rome, the presence in Rome of the tombs of Peter and Paul, and the catacombs, caused a corresponding shift in pilgrimage to these more specifically Christian sites. At the same time, the development of the doctrine of purgatory, and the belief that the individual's time in purgatory (or that of his relatives) could be lessened by acquiring merit, caused the growing practice of the granting of indulgences as a reward for faithful pilgrimage. Thus when the Papal Jubilee was celebrated in 1300 the indulgences offered on that occasion are said to have drawn more than 20,000 pilgrims to Rome. The early Christian Middle Ages also saw a vast – and frequently dishonourable – trade in sacred relics: theoretically repositories of divine power, but often in practice nothing more than, as the cynical Chaucer expressed it, 'bones and ragged bits of clout, relics they are, at least for such are known...'

Pilgrimage and the viewing, touching or kissing of such relics were closely connected, and the superior centres of pilgrimage gradually acquired vast stores of relics. In 1446 a German pilgrim to the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury recorded that '...we were shown the sword with which his (Becket's) head had been struck off. Then they also showed a remarkable piece of the holy cross, and one of the nails, and the right arm of the honourable knight Saint George and a single thorn from the crown of thorns, mounted in a monstrance.'

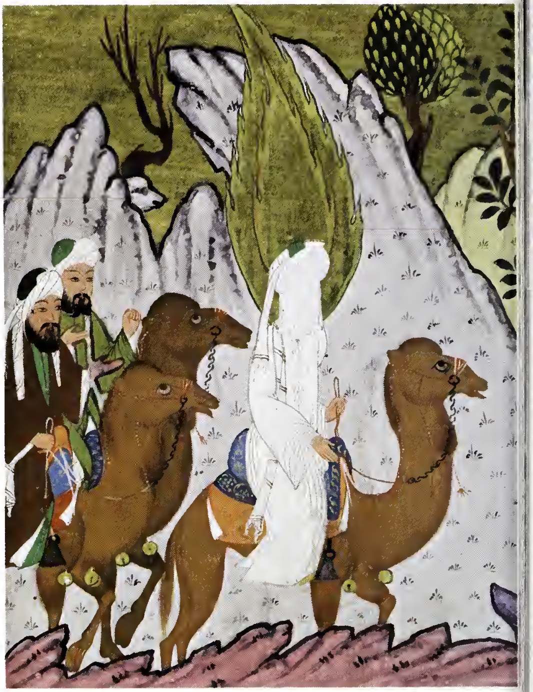
Elsewhere in England, for instance at the celebrated shrine of Glastonbury, which was almost certainly a Celtic cult centre before being Christianized, stores of relics were kept and miracles of healing were recorded as late as the 18th century, long after the Reformation. (See also RELICS.)

Healing and Disillusion

Pilgrimage for the purpose of healing was common in the Middle Ages. The Venerable Bede told of the place where Oswald, King of Northumbria, fell in battle against the Mercians: 'Many people took away earth from the place where his body fell, and put it in water, from which sick folk who drank it received great benefit. This practice became so popular that as the earth was gradually removed, a pit was left in which a man could stand...'

It has become a commonplace of Church history that the excesses of popular devotion to sacred places and the relics of holy persons were among the causes leading to the Reformation. In the 16th century a chorus of protest was raised by the reformers, with Martin Luther at their head. In 1510 Luther went to Rome, on Church business

Picturepoint, London



The East abounds with sacred places: for both the Hindu and Buddhist the merit gained in the act of pilgrimage leads to an improved status in the next life and thus ultimately to release from the wheel of rebirth *Above left* The Temple of the Tooth in Sri Lanka, where a relic of the Buddha is reverently preserved on a golden lotus flower within nine cases of gold
Above right Mohammed with two followers on his way to Mecca, a shrine which has perhaps the longest unbroken tradition of any place of pilgrimage
Below An early souvenir of a Christian pilgrimage: pilgrims' badges, like this one of the archangel Michael, could be bought at holy shrines and served as proof that the pilgrimage had been carried out

but entirely in the spirit of pilgrimage, intent on making the very best of whatever spiritual benefit the city could offer him. His sense of disillusion grew largely as a result of the sheer levity of many of the sacred proceedings. He did not then doubt that merit was to be gained; what he did doubt was that it could be transferred to the dead. There is a story that he ascended Pilate's staircase on his hands and knees in the approved manner, hoping thereby to extract his grandfather from purgatory. At the top he stood up, and said to himself, 'Who knows whether it is so?' On such doubt was the Reformation based.

But the doubt of the reformers led directly to the distress of the faithful. In England, the shrine of Walsingham, reputed to contain a few drops of Mary's milk, was suppressed at the Reformation. Although Protestantism has always looked with disfavour on the custom of pilgrimage and the religious views on which the practice was based, the Roman Catholic world has continued to believe in the efficacy of holy places.

Many of the old shrines have disappeared beyond recall; but others have been reopened – Walsingham, for example – and new shrines have arisen. The most celebrated of these is certainly that at Lourdes, in the French Pyrenees, where in 1858 a peasant girl, Bernadette Soubirous, saw visions of the Blessed Virgin (see LOURDES). All the classical features of the pilgrimage centre are there: manifestations of holy power, a sacred spring, and healing miracles. At Knock in Ireland, where a vision of St John and St Joseph with the Virgin Mary, on the end wall of the village church, was reported in 1879, sufficient money was raised locally to build an international airport, and the church now attracts more than one million pilgrims annually. There are also similar centres of pilgrimage on the American continent, for instance at St Anne de Beaupre, near Quebec.

Michael Holford/Salisbury and Wiltshire Museum

It seems that it is only the materialist mind that is unable to accept the premises on which the case for pilgrimages rests. The intuitive religious mind believes implicitly in the supernatural world, and in its manifestations in the world of time and space. Wherever those manifestations take place, man may profitably come to worship and pray and receive strength.

There's no discouragement
Shall make him once relent
His first avowed intent
To be a pilgrim.

To such a man or woman, the words of the great allegorizer of pilgrimage, John Bunyan, express part of the assured order of things.

ERIC J. SHARPE

FURTHER READING: Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales* (Penguin, 1951); V. and E. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (Columbia Univ. Press); P. Higgins, *Pilgrimages: a Guide to the Holy Places of Europe for Today's Traveller* (Prentice-Hall, 1984).

MRS PIPER

ONE OF THE MOST remarkable mental mediums of all time, Mrs Leonora E. Piper (1857–1950) of Boston, Massachusetts, discovered her mediumistic gifts almost by accident. In 1884, being in ill-health, she consulted a blind healing medium named J. R. Cocke. At her second visit she passed into a trance, and wrote down a message for one of the sitters which greatly impressed him. She then held sittings privately in her own home, and was favoured by 'communications' from various of the 'mighty dead'. However, the messages which less illustrious 'communicators' gave to their friends and relatives on earth were sometimes so remarkable that Mrs Piper began to enjoy local fame.

In 1885 communications from the 'mighty dead' were replaced by those of a French doctor, 'Phinuit', who vouchsafed a great many details about his career on earth; some were contradictory, and none were verifiable. At a sitting Mrs Piper would pass into a deep trance; after a few minutes she would begin to speak with the gruff, male voice of Phinuit. Phinuit would give sitters accounts of the doings of deceased (and sometimes of living) friends and relatives, and would transmit messages from them, often with appropriate gestures.

Mrs Piper's reputation reached William James, Professor of Psychology at Harvard University. James went to sit with her, and received a good deal of information about, and allegedly from, members of his own family. He was sufficiently impressed to send some 25 other people to her under pseudonyms.

Richard Hodgson, a leading member of the British Society for Psychical Research, assumed charge of the investigation in 1887. Hodgson arranged for the careful recording of all sittings, and took the most extreme precautions against trickery. Sitters were introduced anonymously. Mrs Piper was shadowed by detectives for some weeks, but no evidence was found that she made inquiries into the affairs of possible sitters. Finally Hodgson and William James arranged that Mrs Piper should spend the winter of 1889–90 in England, where she knew no one, and could have no established agents. During her stay all her sittings were arranged and supervised by leading members of the Society for Psychical Research – Sir Oliver Lodge, Professor and Mrs H. Sidgwick, F. W. H. Myers and Dr Walter Leaf.

Despite all the precautions taken in England and America, Mrs Piper continued to get results. It was true that her chief 'control', Dr Phinuit, was altogether a shady character. At times his behaviour towards the sitters was extremely suspicious. He would 'fish' for information in the most blatant manner, and if given any would reproduce it himself without acknowledgments. If he made a mistake he would cover up in a childish and absurd manner. But when Phinuit was on form, he would, with hardly any hesitation, relay copious and largely correct 'communications' from the deceased friends and relatives of sitters, messages which would turn out to be very accurate even in tiny details.

In and after 1892 Phinuit was gradually superseded by a communicator called 'George Pellew'. Pellew, who had been killed a few weeks previously, had been a young man of philosophical interests, who came from an aristocratic Anglo-American family. He was known to Hodgson, and five years before had sat once with Mrs Piper. He had been introduced under a pseudonym. The 'G.P.' communicator showed a most intimate knowledge of the concerns of the living Pellew. Out of 150 sitters who were introduced to him, G.P. recognized the 30 who had been known to Pellew, and only those. He conversed with each of them in an appropriate manner, and showed an intimate knowledge of their affairs; only rarely did he slip up badly.

Masked Investigator

G.P., like Phinuit, would purportedly relay messages from deceased persons; but it now seemed to become easier for the deceased persons to 'communicate' directly by speaking or writing through Mrs Piper's organism. Writing in trance now became much commoner than it had been before; and sometimes communication by voice and by hand would go on simultaneously.

G.P. remained the principal communicator until early in 1897. During this period Hodgson had almost complete control over Mrs Piper's sittings, and very full records were kept. She was paid on the average about £200 a year. This sum secured her services for the S.P.R. without laying her open to the charge of being rich enough to employ agents.

During the period 1897–1905 a group of communicators became predominant who used such pseudonyms as 'Imperator', 'Rector' and 'Doctor'. They claimed, but were unable to prove, identity with the group of 'mighty dead' who had purported to communicate under the same pseudonyms through another medium, the late W. S. Moses. Sittings had to be limited in number owing to the state of Mrs Piper's health. Many sittings were conducted for purely didactic purposes; opinions as to the worth of the teachings varied considerably. Hodgson himself died unexpectedly in 1905, and the notes which he left behind were in undecipherable shorthand. The most extended records of this period are those of Professor J. H. Hyslop of Columbia University. At his early sittings Hyslop went to the length of wearing a mask to preserve his anonymity. None the less he received ostensible communications from his father and other deceased relatives which completely convinced him that Mrs Piper possessed paranormal powers.

Not long after Hodgson's death a communicator calling himself 'Richard Hodgson'

Although the honesty of Mrs Piper's mediumship was never doubted, many felt that the alleged 'communicators' were aspects of her own personality, 'fed' with information gained telepathically from the living

Psychic News

began to manifest at Mrs Piper's sittings. The status of the Hodgson communicator was later analysed without definite conclusions in a long paper by William James. During 1906–7 Mrs Piper visited England again, and she played some part in the experiments which became known as the 'cross correspondences' (see CROSS CORRESPONDENCES). On her return to America she was studied on behalf of the American S.P.R. by George B. Dorr, and then in 1909 by the noted psychologist G. Stanley Hall. The latter's methods seem to have hastened the end of her trance mediumship, which took place in 1911 during another visit to England. She continued, however, to produce automatic writing (see AUTOMATIC ART), and was studied again in 1924–5 by a young Harvard psychologist, Dr Gardner Murphy.

It was agreed by almost everyone who had any extensive first-hand dealings with Mrs Piper and her phenomena that she was completely honest, and that the alleged deceased persons who 'communicated' through her would not infrequently retail correct information about themselves, going far beyond anything which she herself could ever have come across. But as to how the facts should be interpreted there was widespread disagreement. Richard Hodgson and F. W. H. Myers became in the end convinced that the 'communicators' really were the spirits of deceased persons. But others felt it more likely that the alleged 'communicators' were simply aspects of Mrs Piper's own personality, 'fed' with information gained telepathically from living people. Her personality showed through the 'communicators' in many ways – for instance in their ignorance of science and literature, their interest in clothes and hats, and the kinds of common associations which they all seemed to possess. Yet the information given by communicators was not infrequently quite unknown to any of the sitters, so that the hypothesis of telepathy with the living has its difficulties.

ALAN GAULD

FURTHER READING: Alta L. Piper, *The Life and Work of Mrs Piper* (Routledge, London, 1929); W. H. Salter, *Zoar* (Arno, 1975).

PISCES

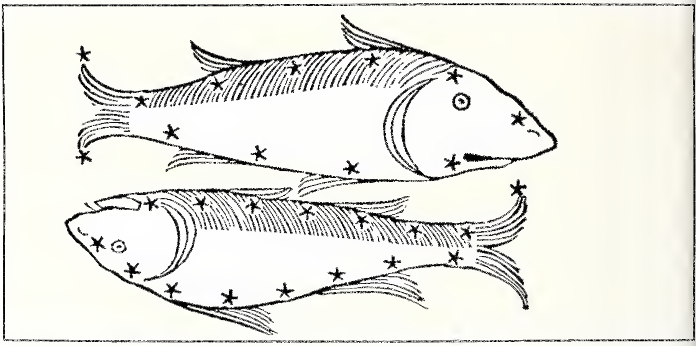
THOSE BORN between 19 February and 20 March fall under the sign of Pisces, the Two Fishes, the last sign of the zodiac. This sign may be of Egyptian origin, for there were two fishes among the Egyptian constellations, in the proximity of the Square of Pegasus, whereas the Babylonians described this part of the sky as either the Giant, the Tails, the Great Swallow, or by the name of a goddess. The ruling planet of the fishes was once said to be Jupiter, but from the 1840s onwards astrologers have become inclined to prefer Neptune as ruler of this sign. Pisceans, like Neptunians, do not mind being overcome by emotion, in fact, they enjoy it. They excel in any profession in which they have to act up to a situation.

Because of their genial, pleasure-loving temperament Pisceans will always make the best of any situation; and they more often find themselves in situations rather than deliberately contrive how things are to turn out. They often succeed as journalists, actors, or in any profession where it is an advantage not to keep too close to reality. They are kind, good-natured, generous, but often rather weak-willed.

Pisceans are attracted by strange and exotic places, and a few may even take the trouble to go there; a feeling for remoteness is thus the common element of the mystics, the travellers and the astronomers with whom this sign abounds. Typically they are not interested in having problems too clear-cut; they prefer to leave things vague and allow them to solve themselves. They are often and easily taken in by advertising rackets and other bogus 'opportunities'.

Versatility is another quality of Pisces; for though it is an advantage to have a family tradition, for example in music or architecture or acting, a Piscean often ignores pressures that urge him towards a particular career. Although he is most typically, 'the average sensual man', he is also more than that. Having decided that he will never 'set the Thames on fire', one may be astounded to find him suddenly doing something quite remarkable.

It is tempting to write off the Piscean as nothing more than a pleasant companion, only to discover later to one's surprise that he is quite capable of hard work and devoted service. He is normally too fond of gossip to be properly discreet in conversation, and with increasing age becomes too casual to dress with normal care. He gets on well with all kinds of people, however, and is therefore popular. He is supposed to err in the direction of Mr Micawber's weakness, always hoping that something will 'turn up', but perhaps the Piscean is not quite so casual as he is represented.



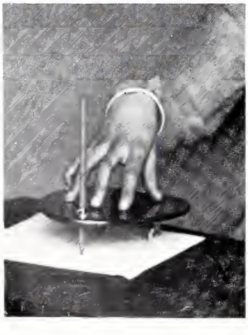
Pisceans, whose sign is the Two Fishes, are generally kindly people with a feeling for the mystical and the exotic

---

Planchette

Apparatus for receiving communications purportedly from the dead; variant of a ouija board, with a pencil attached to a board which moves on castors over a blank sheet of paper and writes 'messages', ranging from aimless marks to words, sentences or even long stories, without being consciously manipulated by the operator.

See OUIJA BOARDS.



University of London/Harry Price Library

Planets

Heavenly bodies believed in astrology to influence events on earth and particularly the personalities and fortunes of human beings; a horoscope charts their positions in the sky at the moment of a person's birth, or at any other significant moment; named for Roman deities from whom their characteristic influences have been drawn; magicians frequently attempt to use planetary influences.

See ALCHEMY; ASTROLOGY; CORRESPONDENCES; DAYS; FORCES; JUPITER; MAGIC; MARS; MERCURY; RENAISSANCE; SATURN; VENUS.

Axel Poignant

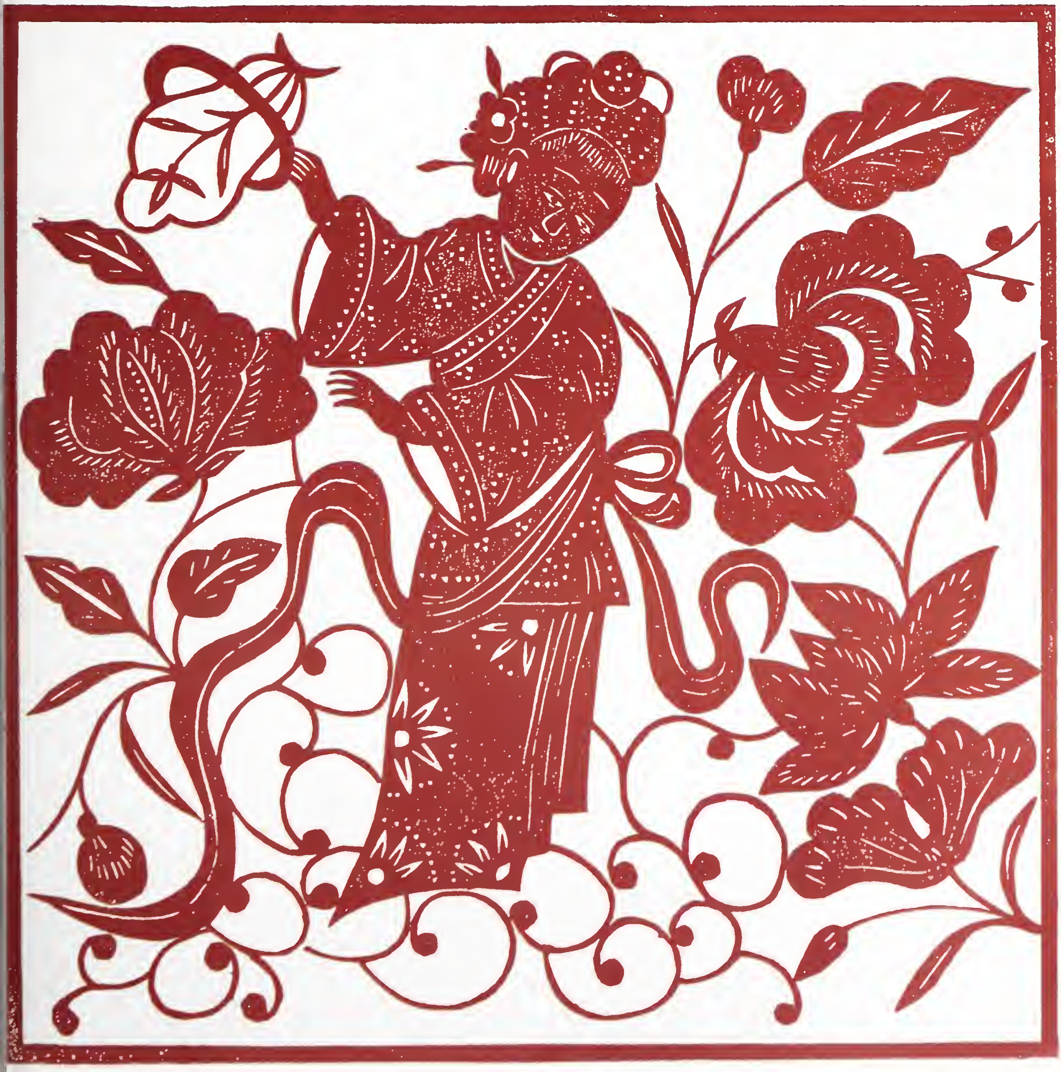
If you step inside a fairy ring in Sweden, you risk becoming a prisoner of the little people, but in Germany these bare circles in the grass are said to be caused by a dragon resting there; centuries before botany became a scientific study, man endowed the plants around him with magical properties

PLANTS AND FLOWERS

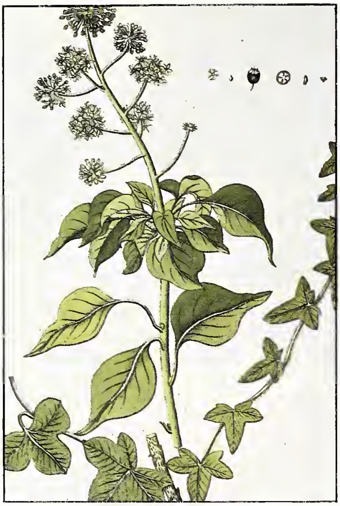
OUR EARLIEST ANCESTORS plucked and ate all kinds of plants, and came to realize how some had thorns or stings, while others appeared to soothe; some were good to eat, others unpleasant or deadly, and a few had curious effects if swallowed. And as man began to develop ideas about gods and spirits, about good luck and bad luck, he connected many of these ideas with plants – for if a plant could kill, intoxicate or soothe, it must have an inner power.

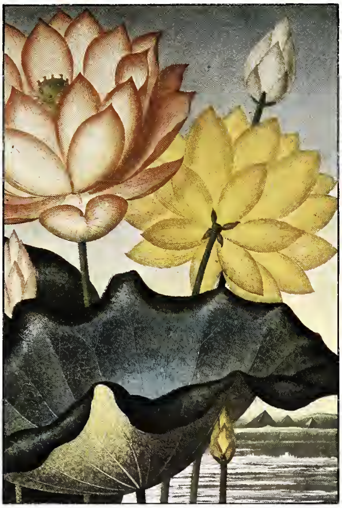
Doubtless the Neolithic people who lived in the early township at Catal Hüyük in Anatolia knew much about plants; certainly the Egyptians worshipped and enjoyed the Nile water lily or lotus before 3000 BC and the Sumerians knew a great deal about herbs by 2200 BC. In these early civilizations plants not only provided food but were almost the only known medicines and provided almost all cosmetics and dyes. Trees, outspanning human lives, were very early objects of veneration; indeed, like the oak, they might be the seat of deity itself, while evergreens such as fir were obvious symbols of immortality.

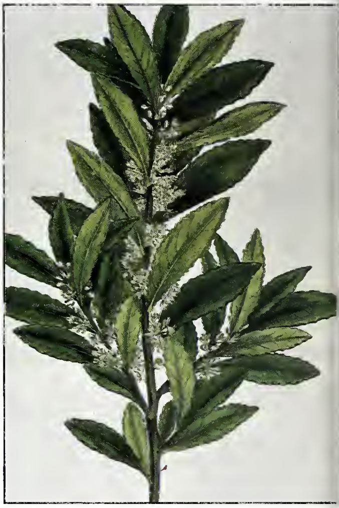
Curiously, many useful or beautiful plants have little or no links with myth and magic; while some insignificant plants such as vervain, for instance, are important. Few food plants are magical, although corn is the chief plant representing the annual return of summer, the defeat of winter, and the


Pearl Binder

Flowers are valued for their beauty and perfume, for real or supposed medical and magical properties, and as symbols which can be used to convey messages: this Chinese embroidery pattern, showing a heavenly spirit with flowers, has the meaning, 'May the owner receive the many good gifts of life'







successful production of food. It was used in the rites of Osiris and Adonis whose death was symbolized by the blood-red anemone.

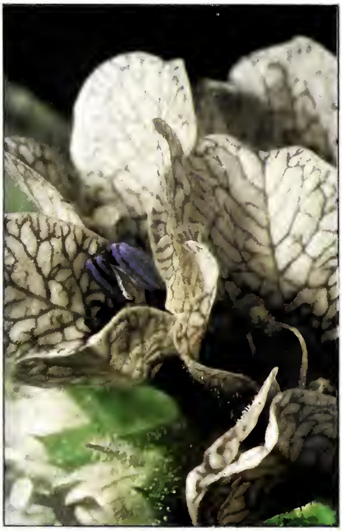
Many herbs with real or supposed healing qualities inevitably have magical attributes and rituals attached to them to canalize their power. Apart from the genuine herbalists, those wishing for power encouraged the belief that they possessed it supernaturally, by working up rituals and giving an elaborate range of attributes to their materials of whatever origin.

Plant Protectors

Some plants were specially suitable for magic. The notorious mandrake, for example, the shape of whose root often resembled a human figure, was perfect for associative magic; it also possessed genuine anodyne qualities and, taken in excess, the ability to make people mad. Laurel was early discovered to produce frenzy if chewed, or its smoke inhaled, and hence became the chosen plant of many Greek oracles.

Actual utility or medicinal value, however, was not an essential attribute. The name *Potentilla* means 'little powerful one', yet *P. reptans*, the magically potent British creeping cinquefoil, is an insignificant and useless plant. But the five-fingered leaves of cinquefoils, noted since Egyptian times, made them powerful against evil spirits. Protection against sorcery and any manifestation of evil is one of the most important magical properties of plants. This is usually in general terms, as with garlic, which positively

Above **Some plants and flowers have been thought peculiarly sacred. Ivy (*left*) belonged to Dionysus and Bacchus, and is the plant of poetry, inspiration and ecstasy; as an evergreen it is a symbol of life's continuance through the winter and, with holly, is connected with Christmas. The lotus (*centre*) is one of the great sacred plants of the East, associated with woman and fertility, and with immortality. Laurel (*right*) was the plant of Apollo, and poets, athletes and heroes were crowned with laurel wreaths *Below* Poisonous or narcotic plants are naturally connected with magic and witchcraft. Fumes from burning henbane (*left*) are recommended as an aid to summoning up demons. Hemlock (*centre*) is another poisonous plant and deadly nightshade (*right*) was taken by those who wished to foretell the future**



exudes magical propensities. Despite its reputed origin in the first left footprint made by Satan when he was thrown out of Paradise, garlic has many actual and supposed virtues as food and medicine. It is an example of a cure-all, or *theriac* as Galen called it. Protection is sometimes specific, like that offered to farm animals and their products by the lesser celandine – a piece of associative magic due to the teat-like shape of the tubers and the butter-colour of the flower.

One of the important protectors was hazel, used for wands and sceptres – symbols of magical and temporal power. In Scandinavia hazel was sacred to Thor, one of the plants sprung from lightning, and thus protective against it. Many plants were believed to keep off lightning: the humble houseleek, sacred to Jove, was at one time planted on cottage roofs throughout Europe. It also kept away fire and was reputedly a very positive protection against witches.

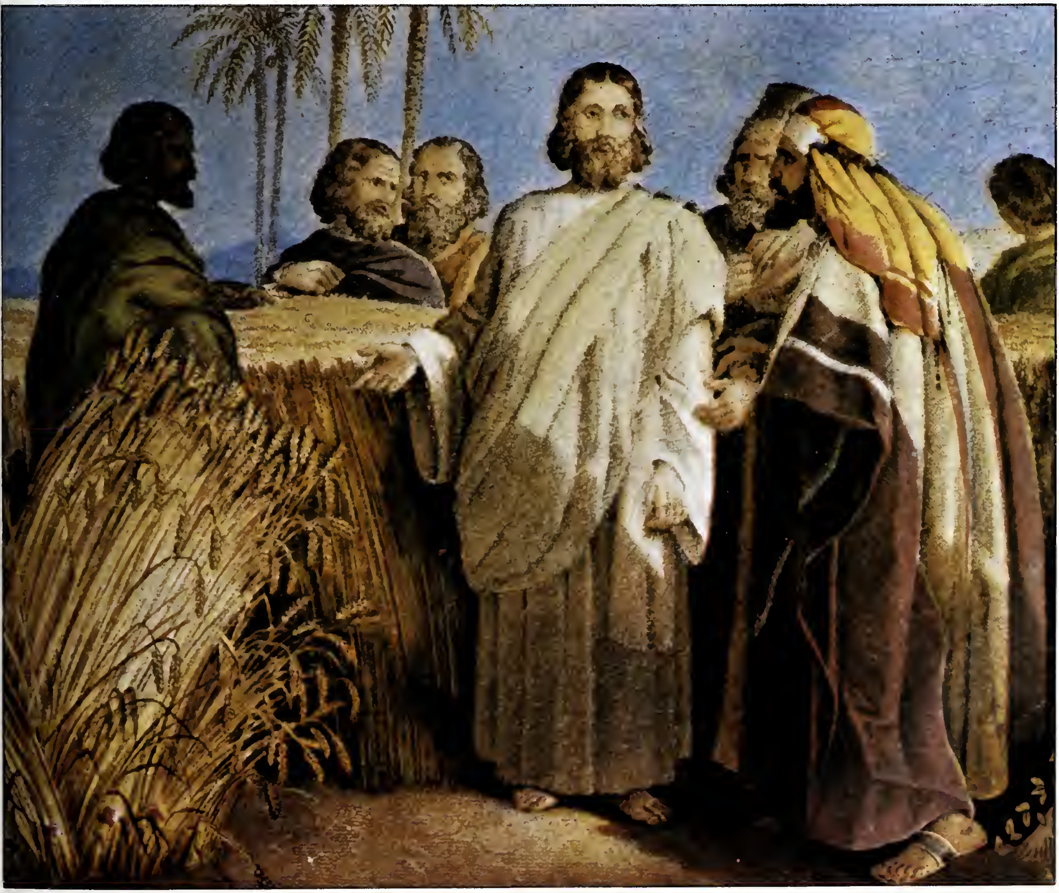
It was not always plants with medicinal qualities which served against witches. Herb Paris, *Paris quadrifolia*, is poisonous, bitter and emetic. Yet, doubtless because of its unusual regular cross-pattern – four leaves, a flower of four inner and four outer divisions, and in due course a shining black berry in the centre – it was specially effective against sorcery. It was the berries that were used for this purpose; no doubt to counter imperfections more readily, they were used in odd numbers from three to nine.

The slightly poisonous bitter-sweet or woody nightshade, *Solanum dulcamara*, was used in a similar way. Human beings and animals suspected of being 'overlooked' by the Evil Eye, or otherwise under a witch's influence, would have a garland of bitter-sweet hung round their necks. The herbalist Culpeper wrote how it was 'excellent good to remove Witchcrafts both in men and beasts: as also all sudden diseases whatsoever . . .'

Certain plants produce bad luck in some circumstances. The blackthorn and hawthorn are still widely considered unlucky if brought into the house – although in the proper place hawthorn is a lightning protector, a holy and healing tree. This further exemplifies the constant ambivalence of good and evil, because a solitary tree on a hillside would certainly be a 'fairy bush', and to do anything drastic to it, or even to sleep under it, would be fatal. Yarrow is another splendidly ambivalent plant, originally regarded as dedicated to the Devil, but with due care admirable for divination and keeping away evil, as well as having genuine herbal qualities. The elder tree was associated with bad luck, witches, and spirits who actually inhabited the tree; yet if properly handled, the elder was protective and indeed enabled one under certain circumstances to find out what witches were doing.

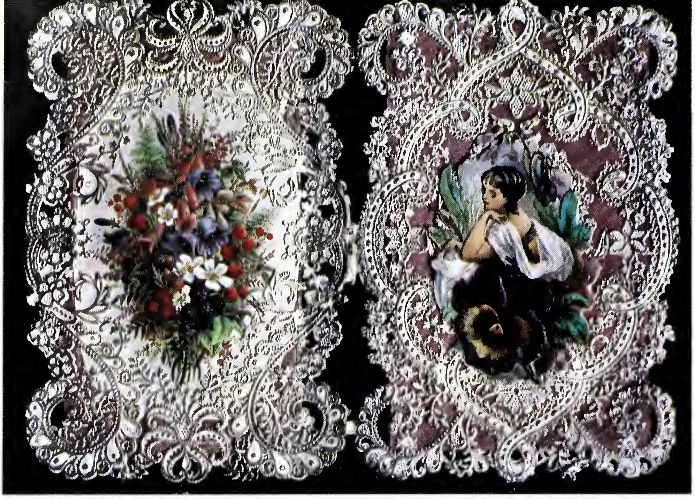
Flowers of Evil

Not surprisingly some of the really potent witch plants were poisonous or narcotic. Such was deadly nightshade, *Atropa belladonna*, one of the most poisonous of European wild plants. It was taken by those who



'Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit' (John 12. 24). Corn is the chief plant representing the defeat of winter and the return of summer, and hence the triumph of life over death: Christ in the cornfield, a painting on a plate by Jesse Austin, c 1840

Sonia Halliday



G.L. Carlisle

Victorian Valentine card, illustrating the 'language of flowers', each flower having its own hidden meaning: a posy had to speak volumes when the presence of a chaperone prevented the open expression of romantic sentiments

wished to see spirits and foretell the future, made into potions to drive people mad or even to kill them, and was also believed to be one of the ingredients with which witches rubbed themselves when they wanted to fly (see FLYING OINTMENT). The name *Atropa* comes from Atropos, one of the Fates of classical mythology, who cut the thread of life. The name *belladonna*, meaning beautiful lady, was given to it because it caused dilation of the pupil of the eye and so enhanced one's looks.

Henbane, *Hyoscyamus niger*, is a close relation of nightshade, almost equally poisonous but fortunately lacking the attractive berries. It can cause convulsions and temporary madness, and so, like nightshade, was much used by witches. It has been a powerful plant for thousands of years: an Assyrian tablet records its value, if placed at the door, to keep sorcery from the house. Henbane had various magic uses. It was effective in love potions and could be used to assist the clairvoyant. The smoke that was given off when the plant was burnt enabled a witch to conjure up spirits. It was much used by physicians and herbalists from early times as a painkiller, especially for toothache, sometimes with serious consequences. The trance-inducing quality no doubt gave rise to the belief that if a child falls asleep near a plant of henbane he will not wake up. These poisonous, witch-favoured plants have now redeemed themselves, for some of them provide drugs which in the hands of modern doctors are of considerable value.

Christianity adopted certain plants, of which the minute weed pearlwort, *Sagina procumbens*, is an example. Especially in the Scottish Highlands, under the name *mothan* or *molus*, it was a very holy plant, the first that Jesus Christ stepped on when he rose from the dead. Placed over the door, it stopped the fairies from entering; in the byre, it protected cows against fairies, while if a cow ate pearlwort the protection extended to the milk and any who drank it. It was placed below the right knee of a woman about to give birth, to keep the fairies from her and the child at a most vulnerable moment. Country girls would wet their lips with the juice to attract men, and place a piece in their mouths when they kissed, to ensure that their lover was always faithful.

On the whole, however, plants associated with magic or witchcraft were simply Christianized. A good example is the ragwort mentioned above, which became called *Herba Sancti Jacobi*, the herb of St James. It was no doubt linked with the saint because it is in full bloom on 25 July, St James's Day. When St Patrick explained the Trinity to the Irish – three parts, one whole – he used the clover as example, and in doing so made use of a plant which had long been valued for protection against fairies and witchcraft. The rare four-leafed specimen is still regarded as very lucky, but in older times it not only saved you from sorcery but enabled you actually to see fairies and pick out witches.

Several plants have a positive association with death, like the bean, thyme and foxglove, whose flowers were inhabited by the souls of the dead. Many plants betokened death, like a primrose blooming unseasonably in winter, or a single primrose or snowdrop brought indoors.

Marriage Magic

In the realm of domestic magic, plants play an important part. There were, for instance, a great many ways in which girls could find out whom they were to marry and whether their lovers were faithful. One method was to place a four-leafed clover in a girl's right shoe. The man in her life would be the first she met – or, in an amusing twist, a man with the same name. John Aubrey records how, on St John's Day 1694, he was walking in a meadow when he saw two dozen well-dressed young women apparently weeding. He was told that they were looking 'for a coal under the root of a plantain, to put under their head that night, and they should dream who would be their husband'.

A sprig of myrtle placed in the prayer book at the page where the marriage service asks 'Wilt thou take this man...?' would tell a girl if her lover would in fact marry her. The prayer book was put under the pillow on Midsummer Eve and slept upon. If the myrtle was not to be found in the morning, the marriage would take place; if it was still there, the young man was considered to be fickle.

Some of the rituals were supposed to conjure up a vision of one's husband-to-be, like the one in which the girl ran around her house three times with a willow branch in her hand, saying 'He that's to be my good man, come and grip the end of it'. At the end of the third circuit a spirit-form of the 'good man' would take hold of the branch.

To ensure that your lover or husband was faithful, you could dig earth from his footprints, place it in a pot and sow marigold seeds in it. Rosemary was woven into bridal wreaths as a token of fidelity; it was also believed to grow well for the righteous, and it is often said to flourish where the wife rules the household.

Fertility is of course one of the oldest and most important of magical aims. In Roman times nuts were presented to newly married couples to ensure fruitfulness, and in France they were used to pelt the bride and groom as rice is still sometimes used today. The phrase 'going a-nutting' was a polite way to indicate love-making, and a good crop of hazel nuts is still linked with the expectancy of many births in the coming year.

In warmer climates the pomegranate is an ancient symbol of fertility, and so is the orange, which is why its flower is so often used in wedding bouquets. This fruit and its blossom also played a part in love charms, and one fascinating native recipe is recorded from Norfolk. A man who wanted to attract a girl had to prick an orange all over with a needle, and then sleep with it under his armpit. After this he would give it to the girl and make sure she ate it – apparently a sure way to guarantee her love.

The direct associations of a plant's appearance led to various beliefs. Due entirely to their testicle-like tubers, the orchid family were given a sexual symbolism, while the phallic 'lords and ladies' not surprisingly represented desire. The striped and speckled blue flowers of the eyebright endowed it with the power to cure the failing eyes which it supposedly resembled, according to the Doctrine of Signatures and the belief that 'like cures like'.

Some plants were associated with certain festivals, such as holly and ivy, the plant symbols of Christmas. The apple was a feature of many games played on Hallowe'en, mainly concerned with love divination.

Candlemas, on the 2 February, was associated with the snowdrop. St John's wort and a great many other plants were ritually connected with St John's Eve and Day, which is also Midsummer Day. Flowers were frequently part of the decoration of early Valentines, the most popular flower in this connection being the rose.

A.J.HUXLEY*

PLATO'S MYTHS

ALL PLATO'S DIALOGUES are themselves stories. They are imaginary conversations, often with vividly drawn characters and settings so well presented that readers find them easy to imagine and remember. And they are full of stories of all sorts, and word-pictures which could sometimes be developed into stories, which are designed to bring home to the reader the various points which Plato wants to make.

Plato knew that if you want people, not just to accept the conclusion of an argument as correct, but to believe something effectively and act on it, you must engage and convince every part and level of their psyche, including what we should call their imagination and feelings as well as their reason (and, for Plato, reason in its highest operation has in it a large element of what we should call imagination). It is not a matter of just assenting to the conclusion of an argument, but of directly seeing or experiencing something, a flash of imaginative intuition in which an eternal truth makes itself immediately present to the mind. These intuitions are rare and Plato seems to have thought that stories would help in the early stages of preparing the mind for them.

The stories he tells in the dialogues, which are usually referred to as Plato's 'myths', are of many different kinds and degrees of elaboration. Some of them are straight allegories, like the story of the birth of the love god, Eros, in the *Symposium*. At Aphrodite's birthday party in the heavenly palace of Zeus, the Spirit of Business Success, having drunk too much, had a rest in the garden, and the Spirit of Poverty slipped in and induced him to make love to her, and so Eros was begotten; a strange intermediate being sharing the characteristics of both his ill-assorted parents.

A strange story which Plato uses in a subtle way is the myth told by Aristophanes, again in the *Symposium*. This tells how once upon a time human beings were spherical, with two faces (one on each side of the head) four arms and four legs. There were three sexes, male, female and hermaphrodite. They were strong and could move very fast by turning cartwheels, and they threatened to storm heaven in the arrogance of their strength. Zeus thereupon split each of them in two, and Apollo shaped and rearranged the halves into the sort of human beings we are today. Since then we have all been half-humans who go about looking for our other halves, and falling in love with them when we find them. Love (homosexual or heterosexual, according to the sex of the complete human one is really half of) is just the desire of wholeness, the desire to become a complete human being by reuniting the two halves.

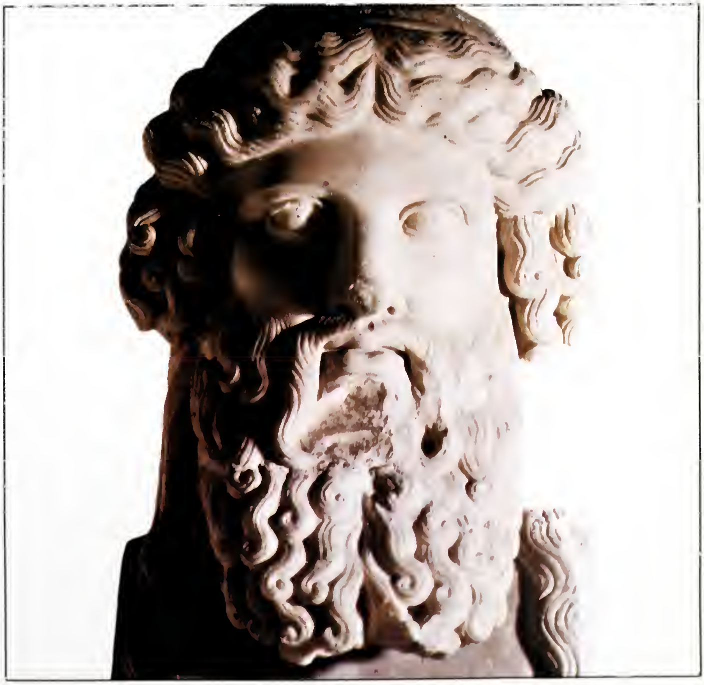
In the *Statesman* there is a very odd cosmic parable, designed to show that there are two forces at work in the world, the divine reason and a sort of basic irrationality. It tells how in one cosmic period God spins the universe one way, and in the next it spins itself the other way and everything goes into reverse until God takes control again. Of course, none of it is intended to be taken literally, and the details cannot be interpreted one by one allegorically – they are just part of the imaginary picture. This is also true of the greatest of Plato's myths, which are stories about the destiny of man and the origin of the world. There are four great stories, in the *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Republic* and *Phaedrus*, which present imaginative pictures of man's life in the other world to which he rightfully belongs and where he returns when he is not incarnated in an earthly body. The story in the *Phaedrus* gives an imaginative explanation of why true philosophical lovers fall in love, and of how they should live and love in order to escape as quickly as possible from the wheel of reincarnation, and return finally to the divine world from which they came. In explaining this, Plato uses an image of immense power and great influence, that of the soul as a chariot (the reason) driving two horses, a vicious one (the bodily passions) and a spirited but tractable one (the higher emotions).

The Divine Craftsman

The other three stories are all about the life of the individual soul between incarnations, when it is judged for its behaviour in this life, brought to a place of punishment or reward, where it remains for a very long time, and eventually is either reincarnated in another earthly body (human or animal) or escapes finally from reincarnation.

In these stories Plato is concerned to get across, imaginatively, doctrines in which he certainly believed – that the soul is immortal (before birth as well as after death); that it rightfully belongs to a higher world, the world of pure intelligence and its eternal objects; and that we are morally responsible, and our fate after death will be determined by the way we choose to live here. But he does not commit himself to the details of his stories – they are just part of the imaginative picture. The basic ideas with which he operates, and many details of the geography of the other world, are taken from a sectarian religious tradition, probably not very ancient, the tradition of the groups called 'Orphic' (see ORPHEUS AND ORPHISM) and the Pythagorean philosophers.

Plato's myth about the origin of the world occupies nearly the whole of quite a long dialogue, the *Timaeus*. This is exceptional. Most of the myths are quite short, and the dialogues in which they occur are predominantly philosophical discussions. Plato seems to have put his account of how divine intelligence made the world (and he certainly believed that it did) into story form for two reasons. Firstly, one cannot give an absolutely certain and completely rational account of something like the physical universe, which is always changing. One can only tell a likely story about it. Purely rational discourse can only be about the unchanging realities known by pure intelli-



G. Tomsich Spectrum Colour Library

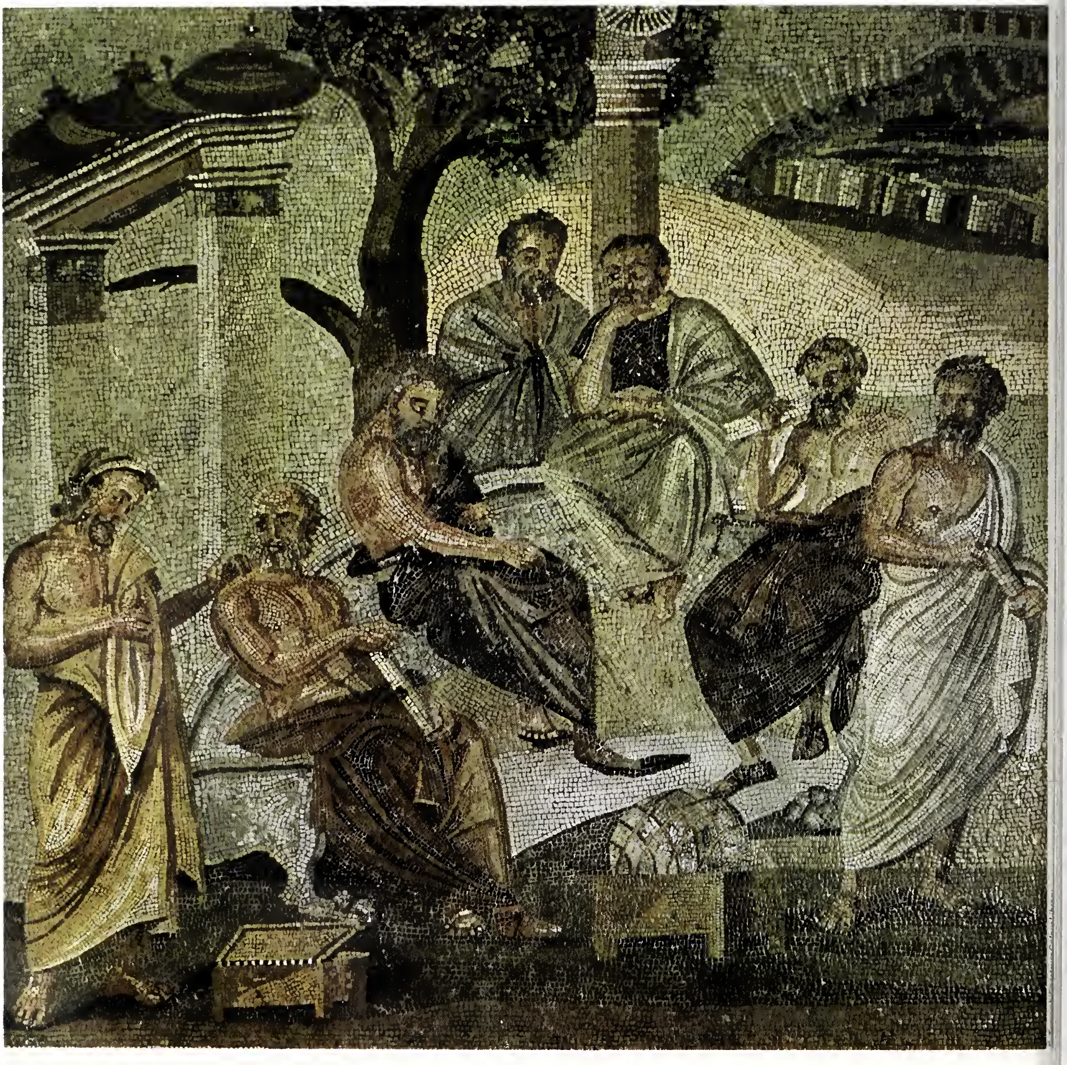
Bust of Plato, in the Musei Capitolini, Rome: he included many 'myths' in his dialogues as a way of engaging and convincing the imagination, as well as the reason, of his audience

gence. The other reason may be that divine intelligence is for Plato something mysterious. It is very difficult indeed for human beings to know what it really is; they can only make more or less inadequate comparisons to suggest what it is like. So in the *Timaeus* divine intelligence is compared to a perfectly good Craftsman who wants to share his goodness generously by making the best possible world according to the best model, the Real Living Thing, an organic unity or universe of immaterial eternal realities. The story tells how he set about making the physical world on this model, and how he coped as best he could with the built-in irrationality in all that is material.

The *Timaeus* was intended to be followed by another long story-dialogue, the *Critias*, of which we have only the beginning. This was to tell in full one of Plato's most famous stories, the story of Atlantis, which is summarized in the introduction to the *Timaeus*. The story relates how the great, rich, arrogant imperialist power of Atlantis invaded the civilized world from its island base in the Atlantic Ocean, and how it was defeated by prehistoric Athens, which Plato intended to represent as his ideal state of the Republic in action; the best possible human city, trained and led by philosopher kings, going out to defeat the forces of tyranny and set the whole world free. The story was to end with Atlantis sinking beneath the sea. Whether Plato knew (as his speaker in the story says) some ancient tradition of a great disaster can never be certain – some dim memory of the volcanic eruption which destroyed Thera (Santorin) might have survived, and he may have known of it; but he was quite capable of making the whole thing up himself. What is certain is that it would not have been a story mainly about Atlantis but about an idealized ancient Athens which was also Plato's Republic, and that Atlantis itself would not have heen any sort of ideal state, but an evil and aggressive power. (See also ATLANTIS.)

A.H.ARMSTRONG

Plato's Academy, a Roman mosaic: the philosopher is pointing to a globe. A myth in the *Statesman* tells how in one cosmic period God spins the universe one way and in the next it spins the other way, and everything reverses



There have been few great philosophers whose life was as completely integrated with their thought as was that of Plotinus, who believed that only the perfectly good and wise man who lives on the level of Intellect can attain unity with the One or Good

PLOTINUS

PLOTINUS (205-270 AD) was the real originator of that last and most influential phase in the revived Platonism of the Roman Empire which we call Neoplatonism. It was he who gave the somewhat incoherent Platonism which he inherited enough shape, depth and vigour, not only to supersede all other still surviving forms of Greek philosophy and dominate unchallenged until the end of Greek intellectual paganism some three centuries later, but to have a deep and lasting influence on the thought of Christians, Moslems and Jews.

A good deal more is known about the life of Plotinus than about that of most ancient philosophers, because his disciple and editor, Porphyry, wrote a biography of his master which he prefixed to his edition (the *Enneads*) of the writings of Plotinus. Porphyry, naturally enough, concentrates on the period when he himself was with Plotinus, about six years nearly at the end of the master's life, and tells us next to nothing about Plotinus's family, childhood and education. It has generally been assumed that he came from Egypt, but even this is not absolutely certain; the one thing that seems to be certain, from his own writings and from what Porphyry tells us about him, is that he was Greek-speaking and completely Greek in education and outlook.

Plotinus went to Alexandria to study philosophy in his 28th year, but could find no teacher to satisfy him until someone took him to visit the mysterious Ammonius. Ammonius was a self-taught philosopher whose pupils included the great Christian thinker Origen and his pagan namesake.

The Move to Rome

Plotinus remained with Ammonius for 11 years. Then, because he wished to learn something about the philosophy of the Persians and Indians, he joined the expedition of Gordian III against the Persians. But he never made any contact with Eastern sages: Gordian was murdered by his soldiers and Plotinus got away with difficulty to Antioch; then he went to Rome, and settled there permanently.

At Rome he became a much venerated philosophical teacher, with a circle of friends and admirers, some of whom came from the highest Roman society. After ten years' teaching, at the age of 50, he began to write the treatises which Porphyry after his death collected and arranged as the *Enneads* . He continued to write until his death. After Plotinus had been 19 years in Rome, Porphyry joined him and remained for six years.

In his last years Plotinus suffered from a painful and disgusting illness, which may have been a kind of leprosy. Eventually he gave up teaching and withdrew from the company of his friends and went to live in Campania, in the country house of an old friend who had died. It was there that he himself died, alone except for his doctor, Eustochius, a close friend and disciple. His last words were either 'Try to bring back the god in you to the divine in the All' or 'I am trying to bring back the divine in us to the divine in the All'. When he died his circle of friends had already broken up; it had never been a formal, organized society. So after his death there was no 'school of Plotinus', presided over by philosophers who claimed to be his successors.

Practising What He Preached

The description which Porphyry gives of his master in the last years of his life is very helpful to the understanding of the real spirit and intention of his philosophy. There have been few great philosophers whose life was as completely integrated with their thought as was that of Plotinus, at any rate in his later years. Even allowing for a certain amount of pious exaggeration on Porphyry's part, Plotinus seems to have lived up to his philosophical convictions (which were also, as for most philosophers of his time, religious and ethical convictions) to a quite unusual degree.

For Plotinus, philosophy was a process of waking ourselves up and discovering who we really are. The account which Porphyry gives of Plotinus in his 60's is of a man who has discovered himself as a soul existing eternally on a level higher than that of which we are aware in ordinary experience, conscious of belonging to and living its true life in the world of the Divine Intellect. This is the true reality on which the quasi-reality of our world of sense-experience depends. It is at once a living organism of which the parts are the Platonic Forms or Ideas and a living mind which is also a multiplicity of minds, each of which thinks, and so is, the whole. Plotinus, in one of his characteristic images, describes it as 'a thing all faces, shining with living faces' – and equally characteristically corrects the image immediately afterwards by saying that it is inadequate because it is looking at Divine Intellect 'from outside', instead of becoming it oneself and so seeing it. Because Divine Intellect is not in space or time it is eternally present and available to anyone who will make the effort required to turn to it and find his place in it, thereby discovering his true self.

But for Plotinus return to Intellect was only the indispensable preliminary to a higher stage. In his Platonism the world of Platonic Ideas which is Intellect is indeed the highest reality which we can think and know. We can think and know it because it is a definite, structured whole of parts, a one-in-many. But just for this reason, it cannot be the ultimate source of reality. It is only the first spontaneous but necessary expression, on a definitely lower level, of an infinite and absolute goodness and unity which, because it is infinite and absolute, cannot be thought or spoken about adequately at all.

The goal of all human life is to reach unification, beyond thought or speech, with this One or Good which is the ultimate source of all things and to which all things in their way aspire, impelled by the love of it which it gave them in their creation. But only the perfectly good and wise man who lives on the level of Intellect can attain that goal, by sharing for a moment the mystical union, beyond its ordinary life of knowing, which Intellect eternally has with the One. The mystical union lies beyond philosophy but one must go through philosophy to the end to get to it. Porphyry tells us that while he was with Plotinus his master attained union with the One four times – he himself claims to have done so once.

In the Platonism of Plotinus, soul has many other functions to perform besides contemplating, though they should not hinder contemplation; and Plotinus did not allow his concentration on the higher world to distract his attention from other people and their needs in the lower one. 'He was gentle and at the disposal of all who had any sort of acquaintance with him,' as Porphyry tells us.

Soul, for any Platonist, is not only the contemplator of eternal reality but the principle of movement, life and growth, and of structure and order to the physical universe. It animates the material world, and everlastingly forms and governs it in accordance with the eternal realities which it contemplates. Apart from soul, bodies have no realities at all. Their 'matter' is a dark negativity, an absolute non-existence which is the source of evil in the lower world.

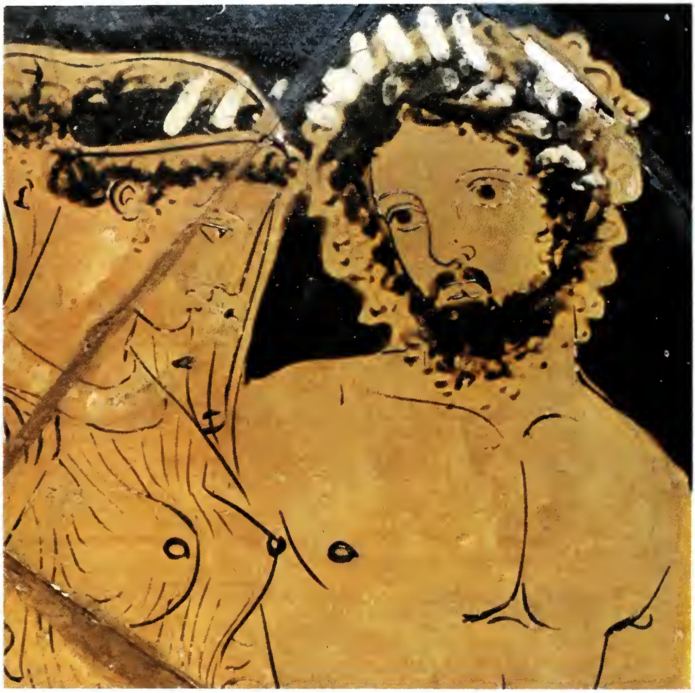
But all bodies, and the material world as a whole, in so far as they are given life, form and ordered movement in time by soul, have a reflection of the glory of the intelligible world in them. The physical universe as a whole is the best possible image on its level of the eternally living world of Intellect. Soul, divine and human, cannot reject it but must operate in it on every level, down to the life and growth in plants and the formation of apparently inanimate bodies.

Plotinus never stopped teaching and writing, trying to bring others to see what he saw, and understand themselves as he understood. But beyond that, without apparently any disturbance of his inner detachment and concentration, he had time for everybody and was ready to help his friends even in their most this-worldly concerns and needs.

He made no fuss about religion, and was generally indifferent to external observances. Nor did he as a rule make much fuss about morality, though his personal principles were austere enough. He preached contempt for the body, and lived ascetically, but he was no inhuman ascetic or withdrawn solitary. To his circle he was not only a philosophical teacher but a spiritual and moral guide and a kindly and practical friend. (See also NEOPLATONISM.)

A.H.ARMSTRONG

FURTHER READING: A.H.Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1940); M.J.Atkinson ed, *A Commentary on Plotinus' Enneads* (Oxford Univ. Press).



C. M. Dixon

The one celebrated action of Pluto in classical mythology was the rape of Persephone, whom he carried off in his chariot to his grim underworld kingdom, the home of the dead and the common destination of mankind

PLUTO

THE GOD commonly known as Pluto in Roman times, and later, was also and more often in earlier times called Hades (*Aides*), though that name has come to be used in modern languages for the underworld where he lived as lord of the dead. In Greek there is also the form Aidoneus, used by Homer in the *Iliad* and in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter; in Latin he is called Dis, a translation of the Greek Plouton which means 'wealthy', and Orcus, commonly derived from the Greek *horkos*, 'oath', because his name was used in oaths. He is also called the subterranean Zeus (Zeus *katachthonios*) as in the *Iliad* (book 9). Among the gods he is the most hated by men, who rarely honour him with cult, and the most separate from other gods. He remains nearly always in his own realm, the House of Hades. The name Hades is generally agreed to mean 'the unseen one'. Hades is the son of Cronus along with Poseidon and Zeus, but he is seldom active in Greek myth.

According to Homer, when Zeus and the other Olympians had overthrown Cronus and his Titans (see CRONUS), Zeus divided the world between himself, Poseidon and Hades: Zeus had the sky, Poseidon the sea and Hades the misty darkness, while the earth and Olympus were common to all (*Iliad*, book 15). In the *Odyssey* Hades as a person is mentioned in Book 11 but always along with Persephone. In the *Theogony* of Hesiod the underworld, including Tartarus, is described as a vast abyss and the prison of the overthrown Titans. Its entrance in the far west is reached by Day and Night in turn as they travel across the sky to 'the awful home of murky Night', which never holds both at once. Somewhere near the entrance, 'there in front', stand the echoing halls of Hades, god of the lower world, where he dwells with Persephone. A fearful hound guards the house, evidently Cerberus.

The Cap of Invisibility

There is only one famous action of Hades or Aidoneus in Greek myth: his breaking through the earth with chariot and horses to carry off Persephone (see DEMETER; PERSEPHONE). The narcissus, which Persephone tried to pluck, had special links with the underworld. Horses, too, had a connection with it in its most alarming aspects and Hades is often called *klytopolos*, 'owner of renowned horses'. Hades is active once more in a curious myth told in the *Iliad* (book 5). Hercules wounded him with an arrow 'at Pylos among the dead' and caused him so much pain that he went up to Olympus to have the arrow drawn out of his shoulder by the healer god Paieon. The commentator Eustathius explains that Pylos here is not the town mentioned in Homer but the gate of the underworld. This passage again suggests that Hades was believed to have his dwelling near the entrance of the underworld as a warden of the dead, which would suit one of his titles, *pylartes*, 'fastener of the gates'. But this pitiless guardian of the dead was simply strict and rigorous, he was not any kind of devil, and his realm, except for some places where notorious offenders were punished, was not a hell, but the common destination of mankind.

A mythical object which by its name was connected with Hades was the helm or cap of Hades, *Aidos kynee*. The name has the general sense of 'cap of darkness' or 'cap of invisibility'. It is worn by Athene in battle with Ares in the *Iliad* (book 5), by Hermes in battle against the giants and by Perseus in his attack on the Gorgons. In myth it is not worn by Hades, nor in Greek art is it shown on his head, nor is it certain that he really owned or lent it.

As one of the chthonic or underground powers, Hades or Pluto has not simply the gloomy aspect which he wears in the epic tradition, nor is he only the lord of the underworld. This is obvious from the name Pluto, connected with *ploutos*, 'wealth', a word which originally meant the wealth of crops which grow out of the ground and of precious minerals which lie beneath it. In this aspect he is thought worthy of cult by Hesiod: 'pray to Zeus beneath the ground'. It was in this aspect again that Hades was associated in cult with Demeter and Persephone at Eleusis. He is called 'another Zeus' by Aeschylus in his *Suppliants* and as Zeus *katachthonios* he is mentioned in Homer with Persephone as enforcer of a father's curse. He is in this sense a power supporting life and the family.

The entrance to the realm of Hades was seen in many caves and clefts to be found about Greece and also in parts of Italy settled by Greeks. The most famous in Greece were the cave of Taenarum in southern Laconia and a whole region of Thesprotia in the northwest. Thesprotia had rivers called Acheron and Cocytus and a lake called Acherusian, all of them names belonging to the mythical Hades, and also an oracle of the dead which, in some traditions, Ulysses visited. Pausanias remarks that Theseus and Pirithous invaded Thesprotia to carry off the king's wife. This looks like a version of their descent into Hades to carry off Persephone. Plutarch says that the heroes went to Epirus to steal the daughter of Aidoneus, king of the Molossians, who had a wife called Phersephone and a dog called Cerberus.

The Greek colonists carried these stories with them when they reached the volcanic region of Campania. They discovered another mouth of the underworld in Lake Avernus, and applied the names of the infernal rivers to various streams. Aeneas, in the sixth book of the *Aeneid*, is shown entering the underworld under the guidance of the Sibyl. Pluto, however, does not appear himself in the *Aeneid*, nor indeed in the story of Orpheus in the Fourth *Georgic*, though he is mentioned as terrifying and unyielding in taking back Eurydice, once Orpheus had looked back at her as he led her out of the underworld. E.D.PHILLIPS

Plymouth Brethren

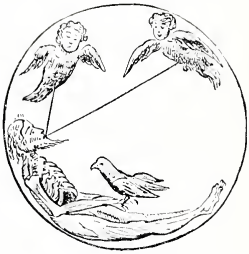
Fundamentalist sect which established its first congregation in Plymouth c 1830, to promote a return to the beliefs and ideals of the earliest Christians: in the 1840s disagreements led to a split between the followers of John Nelson Darby (1800–82), the Exclusive Brethren, and his opponents, generally called Open Brethren.

See EXCLUSIVE BRETHREN.

Pneuma

Greek word for air, breath and spirit, the subject of elaborate physiological and philosophical speculation in the ancient world: the identity of, or close connection between, air and breath, without which men cannot live, and the soul or spirit or vital spark which animates the body, is a very widespread idea.

See BREATH; GNOSTICISM; SOUL.



Ronan Picture Library

The combination of the functions of poet and magician is characteristic of early civilizations, and Celtic bards were particularly renowned for their powers: 'poetic' thinking underlies many human approaches to the supernatural

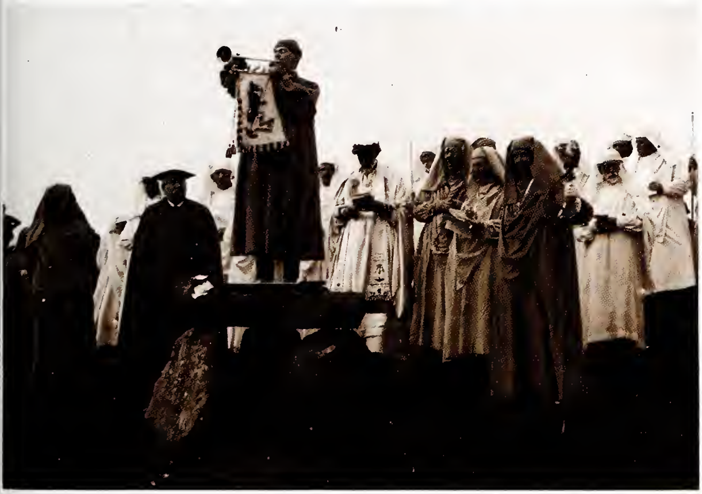
POETS

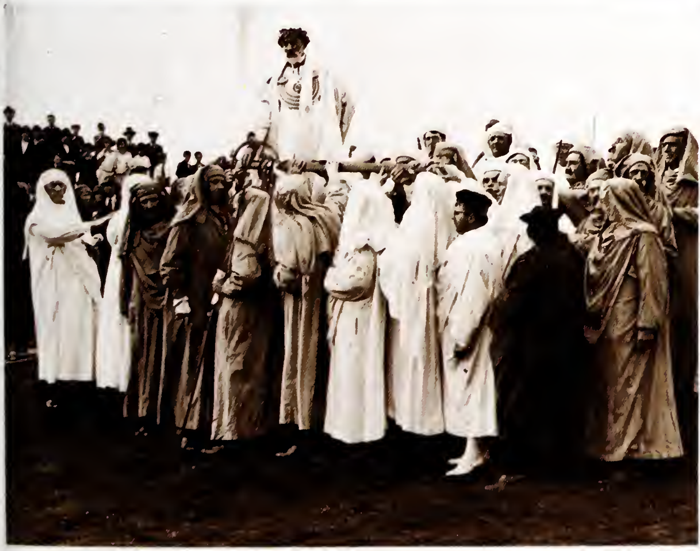
IT IS generally recognized that verse preceded prose as a form of expression in the literatures of the world. At a time when magic played a very important part in the life of early peoples and when they had constant recourse to spells and incantations to accomplish supernatural ends, these took the form of verse rather than prose. Poetry is more easily memorized than prose, and verse-spells, handed down from generation to generation, were in regular use.

While some of these early verse incantations were of a maledictory nature, most of the later ones (known in the Irish language as *orthai*) were apocryphal folk-prayers, with a blend of pagan and Christian beliefs. Their main purpose was to alleviate or cure human ailments.

Irish poetry, especially in the period from 600 to 1100 AD, is one of the most interesting literary phenomena that Western Europe has to offer, and was produced by a literary class that had practised its art for centuries in the bardic schools. These bards (poets) were the shadows, as it were, or successors of high-ranking pagan priests, or Druids (see DRUIDS), and it was natural that at least some of the bardic compositions had the flavour of the magical operations of the Druids.

In the Irish society of early times, continuing down to the 17th century, it was usual for a king or chieftain to have among his retinue a poet, whose duty it was to act as intermediary between the mysterious powers of Nature and his patron.





C. Nelson Stewart

In Celtic societies poets were not clearly separable from Druids or magicians and often combined the functions of all three *Left* Scenes from the Eisteddfod or 'session' of Welsh bards in 1925: the herald sounds a summons (*above*); the bards touch the great sword of peace gripped by the Archdruid (*below*) *Right* The poet Virgil had a medieval reputation as a powerful magician: 3rd century mosaic

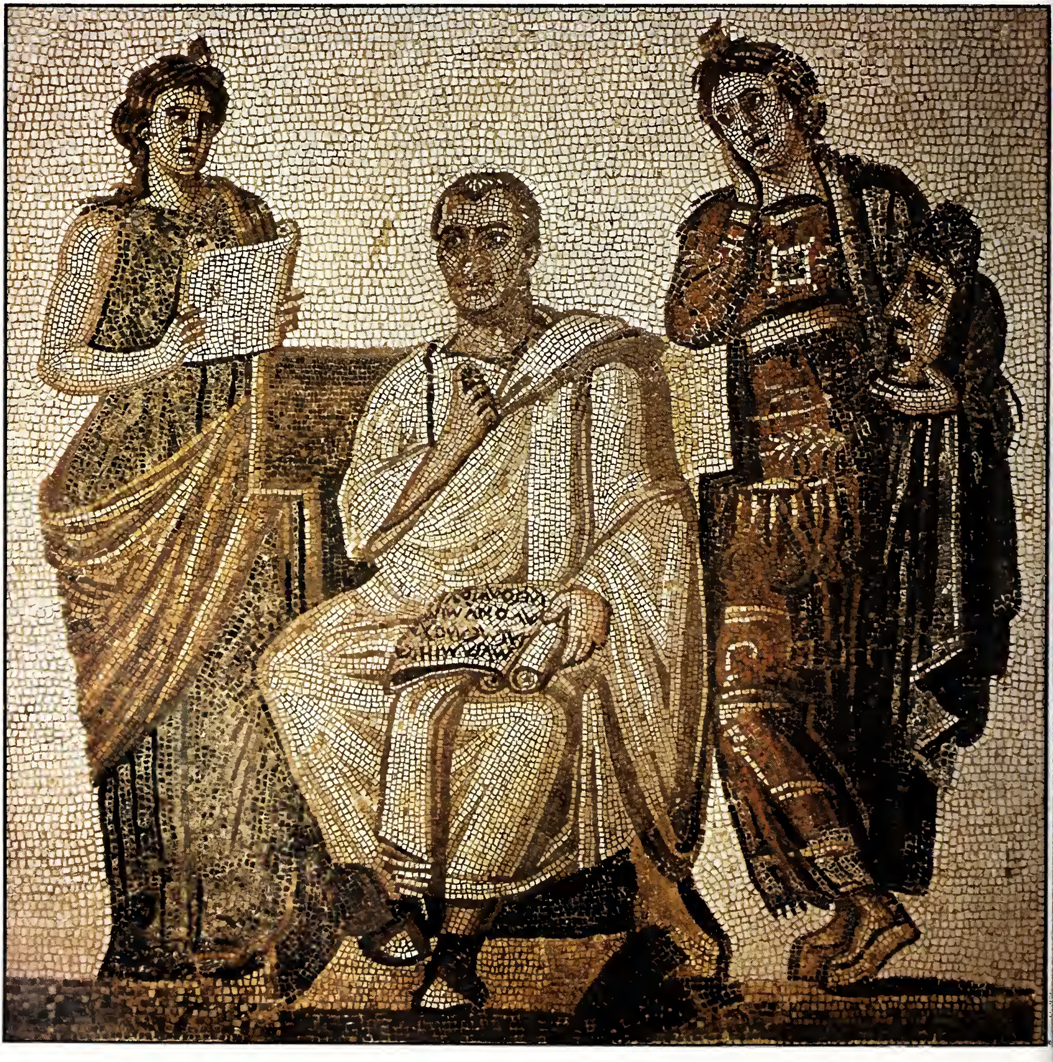
The main function of such poets was to sing the praises of their patrons, and much of their poetry has survived in manuscript. These laudatory compositions were often of a genealogical character, and had no magical connotation.

If, however, as sometimes happened, the poet was offended by lack of gratitude and fitting reward for his compositions, he was at liberty to write satires, according to ancient custom, upon the king or chief in whose service he was retained. It is clear that satires of this nature were not of the type which the word *aer* (satire) now connotes (largely ridicule and mockery), but were intended both to damage the patron's honour and to cause him physical harm. As James Carney has said: 'If an ollave (poet) satirizes a prince he is in effect telling him that the forces of Nature, with which he, the ollave, is in communion, are not satisfied: the result of the satire is an injury to the king's honour (which may show physically as blisters on his face) and possibly a blight on the land.'

Osborn Bergin states that at an early period 'the *file* (poet) or bard had been regarded as a dealer in magic, a weaver of spells and incantations, who could blast his enemies by the venom of his verse'. The early Celtic poets were not clearly separable from Druids and medicine-men, but often combined in one person the functions of all three, so they freely mingled natural and supernatural processes in the practice of their arts.

Rhymed to Death

There is an interesting account from an early Irish manuscript of the method by which a poet satirized a king who had refused him a proper reward. 'The poet himself with six others, on whom the six degrees of poets had been conferred, had to go at sunrise to a hilltop on the boundary of seven lands; and the face of each degree of them towards his own land, and the face of the ollave there toward the land of the king whom he would satirize, and the backs of them all towards a hawthorn which should be on top of the hill, and the wind from the north, and a slingstone and a thorn of the hawthorn in every man's hand, and each of them to sing a stave in a prescribed metre into the slingstone and the



thorn; the ollave sings his stave before the others, and they afterwards singing their staves at once; and each was then to put his stone and his thorn at the butt of the hawthorn. And if it were that they were in the wrong, the earth of the hill would swallow them up. But if it were the king that was in the wrong, the earth would swallow up him and his wife and his son and his horse and his arms and his dress and his hound, a separate curse falling on each.'

The results of the maledictions of Irish poets were varied, according to different accounts in early literature. Pimples, blisters and blotches were raised on the offending patron's face, causing bodily disfigurement. There was no growth of grass, corn or leaves in Leinster after a poet's curse. In other cases, lakes and streams went dry, no fish were caught in river-mouths and plains were barren of produce.

Bo Almqvist, in his study of Old Norse verse magic, tells of some 200 Icelandic poets (16th to 19th century period), who were credited with supernatural powers. They could influence the elements by dispersing drift ice and stopping volcanic eruptions and storms; they could kill destructive animals, such as foxes, and procure seals, whales and fish; they could also force ghosts to disappear into the ground. Their verses were mainly directed against certain categories of people who had attracted special wrath and disgust, such as pirates, Danish merchants and iniquitous officials. As a result of the forceful abuse and violent satire, these people were believed to be struck by life-long misfortunes, strange diseases and sudden death. There are also references to the maledictory powers of early poets among the pre-classical Greeks and Romans, the Arabs, the Eskimos and the Ashanti.

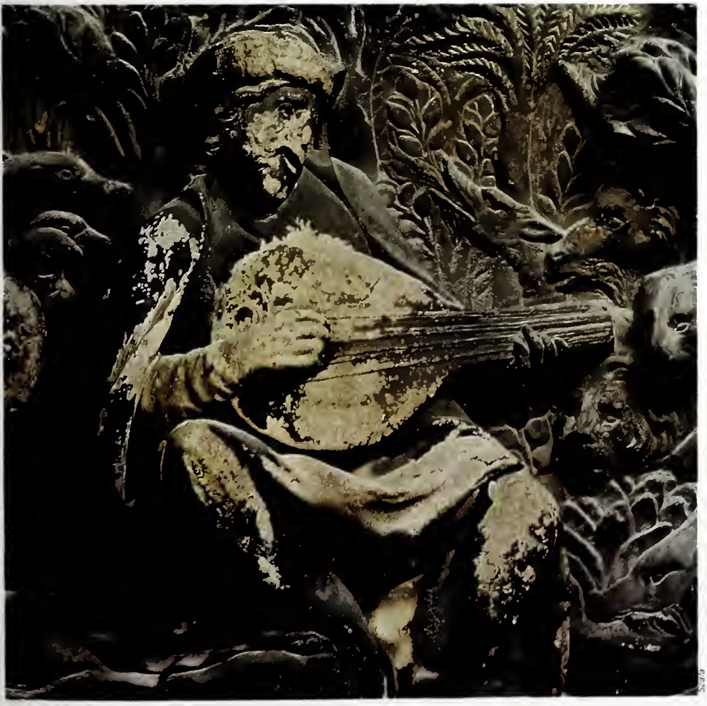
Plague in Your Hearts

Two Irish cursing poems against rats:

Ye rats that have come down from the mountain
And have grown fat among the people,
May your jaws be weak when winter comes,
And strong, wise cats make havoc among you!
Since ye have gone out of control,
Hard may your sufferings be in the fire of pain!
Swim through the tide to Carricklare,
An island devoid of shelter;
There ye may find barnacles and fish –
Leave me, or I shall plant plague in your hearts!

Go, ye brood, across Carrickughtane,
And by short-cut to Milleenamona;
Spend the night at the house of Dan Lane,
A churl of ill-repute;
Tear his cap and rend his blanket;
Eat his shoes and take away his breeches
To make a winter bed in the outhouse;
He has corn stored since last year in his haggard;
So eat it during the autumn;
And if ye run short of food, take up your abode in
his neighbour's house!

The sweet influences of poetry, song and music were widely believed to exert power over animals and the forces of Nature, as well as over mankind. Orpheus the singer, who legend said came from Thrace, could charm the birds and beasts – even 'trees, and the mountain-tops that freeze' – with the unearthly sweetness of his singing



Bane of Rats

The best-known early instance in Irish literature of the belief that poets could banish mice is to be found in a Middle Irish tale, *Imtheacht ne Tromdhaimhe*, which tells how mice had eaten an egg which had been saved up for the 7th century poet Senchan. 'That was not proper for them,' said Senchan; 'nevertheless there is not a king or chief, be he ever so great, but these mice would wish to leave the traces of their teeth in his food; and in that they err, for food should not be used by any person after their teeth; and I will satirize them.' Then follow stanzas in which Senchan threatens the mice with death, and they beg him to accept compensation instead. As a result of his verses, ten mice fall dead in his presence. The poet then said to them: 'It is not you that I ought to have satirized, but the party whose duty it is to suppress you, namely the tribe of cats.' He then pronounced a satire on the lord of all the cats. The intended victim, however, took revenge by carrying off on his back the poet, who was saved from death only through the intervention of St Kieran.

Poets in many other lands too, including Scotland, Greece and Rome, ancient Germany, Arabia, Finland and Iceland, were said to be able to banish harmful animals, especially rats, by means of magic verse. Many examples of this type of verse are to be found in modern Irish folk poetry, down to the present time. Some accounts tell how the poet who was summoned for the task wrote his extempore verse of banishment on a piece of paper, which he then laid at the mouth of the hole in which the rats lived. The poet would name the person (often someone whom he disliked) and place to which the rats had to go. The route was often across water and the designated destination was occasionally promised to be more suitable than their former abode. Stories have been told of how the rats were later seen emerging from the hole, led by a veteran, who carried in his mouth the paper on which the verse had been written. They then made their way across the countryside to the place mentioned in the verse. A further touch of detail is added when it is said that the blind rats among the company were led along by their comrades by means of a wisp of straw which they held in their mouths. The verse was sometimes referred to as *Salm na Mallacht* (the Cursing Psalm), and such rhyming maledictory verses were always in the Irish language and do not seem to have gone over into English.

The belief that poets could also banish creatures other than rats was current in Ireland. In olden times a king named O'Brien was afflicted by a maggot which had settled on his brow; whenever the king attempted to eat some food, the maggot descended and ate it all. A poet was finally summoned and, by the power of the following verse, forced the maggot to emerge, and it was burned in the fire:

> You maggot on O'Brien's brow,
> Eat not the food in his hand;
> You black creature of the beetle's colour,
> Come down from the brow of the king of
> Ireland's princes!

Poets could show their magical power in other spheres also. A poet, who was making his way home over a rough road on a dark night, struck his shinbone against a stone which had fallen from a cairn. The poet stopped and angrily cursed the stone in the following terms:

> The dark moon, alas, has caused my foot to be
> cut;
> You jagged, sharp-edged rock, full of evil,
> May God's curse rend you and make you mend
> your ways!
> You have not let me pass you by late at night.

Next morning, every stone in the cairn had disappeared.

Finally, a story is related in Ireland of a poet who was badly received in a miserly house. When he had left, he composed a verse and wrote it on a piece of paper which he secreted over the lintel of the door. The result was that the churlish woman of the house and others who entered it during the day were forced to dance continuously, until the poet himself was summoned and removed the magic spell.

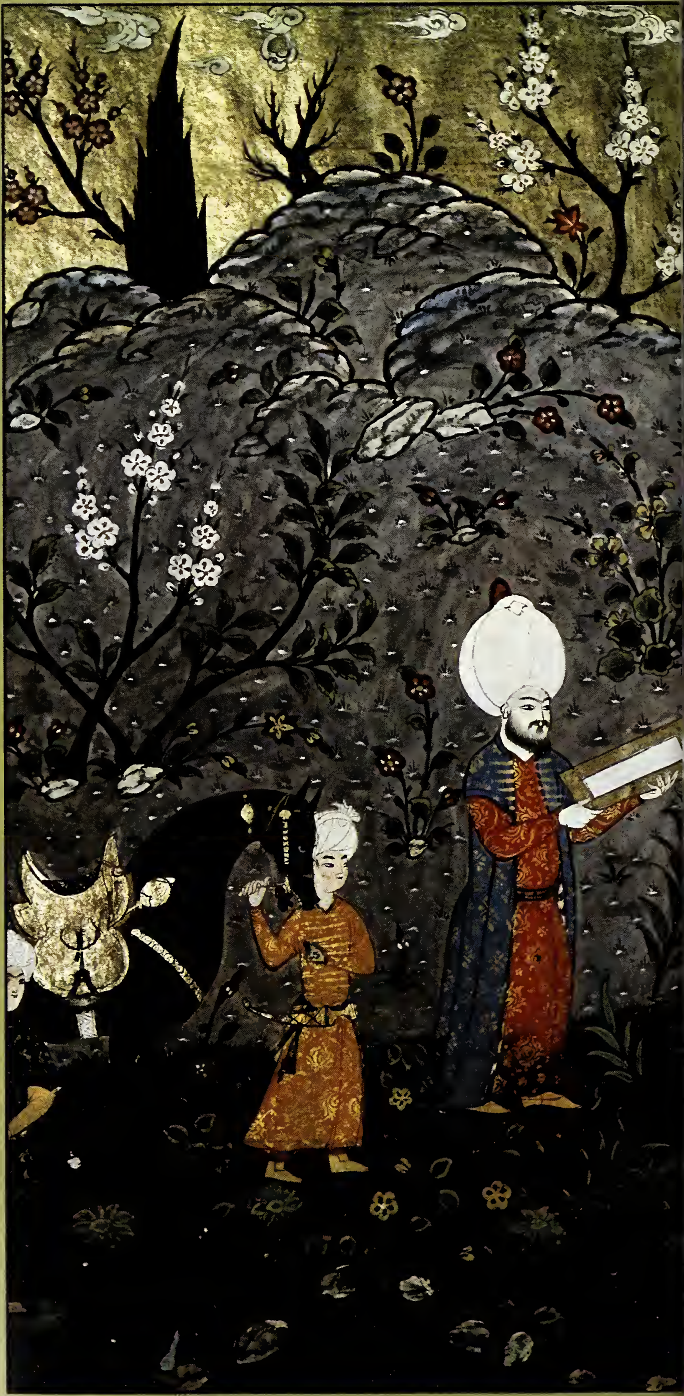
SEÁN Ó SÚILLEABHÁIN

The Poetry of Magic

Magic is related to poetry not merely by its feeling for the power of words but because it depends on what might be called poetic logic, as distinct from rational logic. The magician looks at the world through eyes which see all sorts of links and connections between things which, outwardly and rationally, are not connected at all. Magic relies heavily, as poetry does, on similes, analogies and symbols.

A minor but characteristic example is the presence of bat's blood as an ingredient in some recipes for witch's flying ointment. Why bat's blood, rather than some other sort of blood? Because witches wanted to fly about at night without bumping into things, which is one of the most obvious abilities of the bat. Similar parallels and links lie behind magical rituals, behind the use of the circle and the pentagram, behind the magical systems of correspondences and the symbolism of colours and directions. And the whole magical picture of the world, in the European tradition, is based on poetic analogies between man and the universe, and man and God.

The arts of divination rely on the same kind of logic. A simple case in point is the folk belief that if a candle is guttering, it means that the life of someone in the house is flickering to its close. In popular astrology, if at your birth the majority of planets were



'A Book of Verses underneath the Bough, a jug of Wine, a loaf of Bread – and Thou beside me singing in the Wilderness – oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!': Edward FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat* on the life-giving beauties of poetry in zodiac signs associated with the element of fire, you are likely to be credited with 'fiery' characteristics – warmth, brightness, cheerfulness, aspiration, excitability. The author of a well-respected astrological textbook says that people who have a preponderance of planets in water signs are likely to be 'wet', 'sloppy' or 'drips'. This is not regarded as mere wordplay by traditional astrologers because they have inherited the magical belief, not infrequently shared by poets, that a link between two things in the human mind means that there is a real connection between them in the universe. In all forms of divination the world is regarded as a whole, a pattern, so intricately enlaced that the lines on a hand, the fall of lots and other outwardly random events can provide clues to the nature of the pattern.

This way of looking at things is not confined to magic and divination but has powerfully influenced religious attitudes to the supernatural as well. The concept of man as made in the image of God, or the belief that the virility of the bull influences not only the fertility of herds but also the growth of crops, or the parallel between the crops resurrected in spring, the dying and rising deity of vegetation, and the dead buried in earth to find a new life beyond the grave – these are only a few among many examples of 'poetic logic' applied to the major religious concerns of mankind. The principle of mimicry, on which so much magical and religious ritual is based (see IMITATIVE MAGIC), rests on a poetic analogy between the simulated and the real, between man's activities and those of the universe.

Religion and magic also share with poetry a sense of the profound importance of inspiration, of the glow of illumination in the mind, the sudden grasp, whole, of something previously perceived in fragments or not perceived at all: and this is not with a feeling that inspiration is merely an interesting psychological phenomenon but in the firm conviction that inspiration reveals the truth. The Nuer people of Africa believe that 'God created the world and everything in it out of nothing, by thinking or imagining it, as one creates a poem' (see NUER) and this view of creation is found in many other parts of the world. Sacred scriptures are generally claimed to be divinely inspired, with the implication that only through a revelation from God could their human authors have grasped truths which must always be beyond the reach of reason. Poets and seers, oracles, priests, shamans and holy men have been, and still often are, believed to have access through inspiration to truth not available to the less gifted and less fortunate, to levels of reality deeper and far more significant than the surface world of appearances can reveal.

(See also ARTHUR; INCANTATION; MABINOGION; MERLIN; SONG.)

FURTHER READING: O. Bergin, *Bardic Poetry* (Dolmen Press, Dublin, 1967); R.C. Elliott, *The Power of Satire* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1960); W. Magee, *Bards and Saints* (Folcroft, 1976, c1906); Robert Graves, *The White Goddess* (Faber, 3rd edn, 1952).

Sonia Halliday

POISONING

In an age when little was known about the properties of dangerous drugs, the witches with their brewing of love potions and abortifacients were often blamed for deaths; in many cases the supposed victims of witchcraft probably died purely from a poisoned mind

TWO OPPOSING PRINCIPLES, the force of life and the force of death, are embodied in the images of the healer and the witch. In the Christian era, when all forms of magical healing were stigmatized as heresy, the two images became merged. It is doubtless for this reason that the virtues of the wise-woman of the past have been forgotten, and that today she is remembered more for her poisons than for her love potions, as an abortionist rather than as a nurse.

The rise of the witch mania in Europe was to some extent a by-product of the revolutionary urge to sweep away all the outmoded relics of the superstitious past. On the one hand, the physicians, newly freed from ecclesiastical restraint, demanded the authority to regulate their own affairs and furthermore to impose an embargo upon all lay medical practitioners, while on the other the Church was beginning to see a threat to its supremacy in the survival of magical practice.

The combination of the two pressures led to the imposition of laws against witchcraft which condemned the village healers, herbalists and midwives to constant harassment as poisoners, abortionists and witches. Their situation was always precarious, despite the fact that due to the deficiencies of the medical profession they were in constant demand for the treatment of the sick and the poor. Their knowledge of botanica medicines was probably far superior to that of the physicians, among whom the subject was not studied scientifically until the close of the 16th century. The wise-woman's potions, accompanied by the appropriate incantations, were directed to the cure of the impotent and the barren, while in her capacity as midwife she was able to assist or terminate pregnancy.

All medical practitioners walk the tightrope of power, at the same time the object of reverence and hatred. The wise-woman who was equipped with the means of killing as well as curing was extremely vulnerable

In 1630 the Commissioner of Health of Milan, who had been observed wiping his ink-stained hands on a wall, was immediately denounced for spreading plague poison

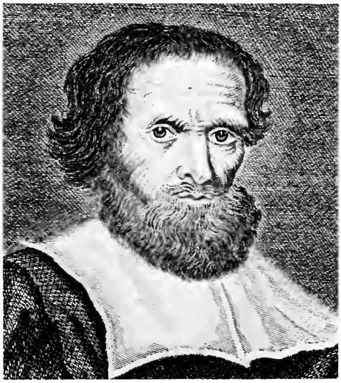
to the charge of infanticide or abortion, and to accusations in the event of a death occurring under mysterious circumstances.

With the advance of chemistry in the 16th century, toxic mineral drugs such as antimony, arsenic and mercury were coming into vogue and deaths from poisoning were now included among the normal hazards of medical treatment. Due to his strongly entrenched position the orthodox medical man stood in little danger of condemnation as a poisoner, unlike the lay healer.

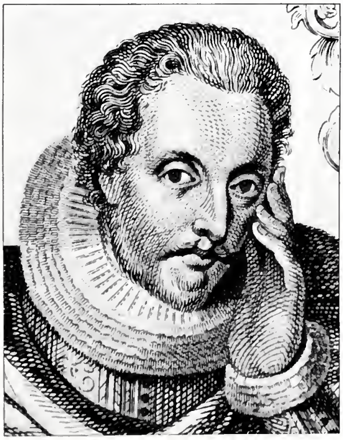
There is some evidence to suggest that the medical profession had a vested interest in branding their non-established rivals, the magician healers, as witches and poisoners, and that by so doing they hoped to drive out their more firmly established competitors. Under the common law of England medicine was then open to all who chose to practise it, but quacks were often prosecuted as witches and poisoners. Thomas Gale, Queen Elizabeth's Sergeant Surgeon, asserted that at two London hospitals, St Bartholomew's and St Thomas's, large numbers of the sick had been 'brought to their mischief by witches, by women, and by counterfeit worthless fellows that take upon themselves the use of art, not only robbing them of their money, but of their limbs and perpetual health.'

Roman Catholics as well as Protestants joined in the attack. In 1554 Bishop Bonner began to take an interest in the activities of certain midwives who were said to be exercising 'witchcrafts, charms and sorcery'. Even the ecclesiastically licensed midwives openly practised magical arts, and were described by their critics as closer to paganism than to Christianity.

The prevailing doctrine of witchcraft branded the magician healer as the Devil's agent, and declared it to be her mission to destroy life, not only by magic but by poisonous substances, by infanticide and abortion. The eminent demonologist John Nider was convinced that midwives, in attempting to secure abortions, administered dangerous drugs to the mother, and when these failed stabbed long needles into the brain of a new-born child. The supposed object of child murder by witches was twofold: to obtain bodies for the manufacture of poisons and unguents which could then be used to destroy their fellow human beings, and to a lesser extent, to procure offerings for Satan. It is doubtful, in fact, whether such horrors ever took place outside the morbid imagination of prosecutors. Nevertheless, spurred on by the need to save the unbaptized child from the fiery hell to which theology had consigned it, the interrogations of the witch-hunter, combined with torture, produced what was then considered satisfactory evidence of such a conspiracy.



Poisoning has always had a close connection with witchcraft and the powers of darkness *Facing page* 'Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected, with Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected': the play scene from *Hamlet*, by a noted Victorian painter, Daniel Maclise *Above* Simon Forman, an astrologer and wizard of the 17th century, who was employed by the Countess of Essex to supply potions: he may have been involved in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury (*below*)

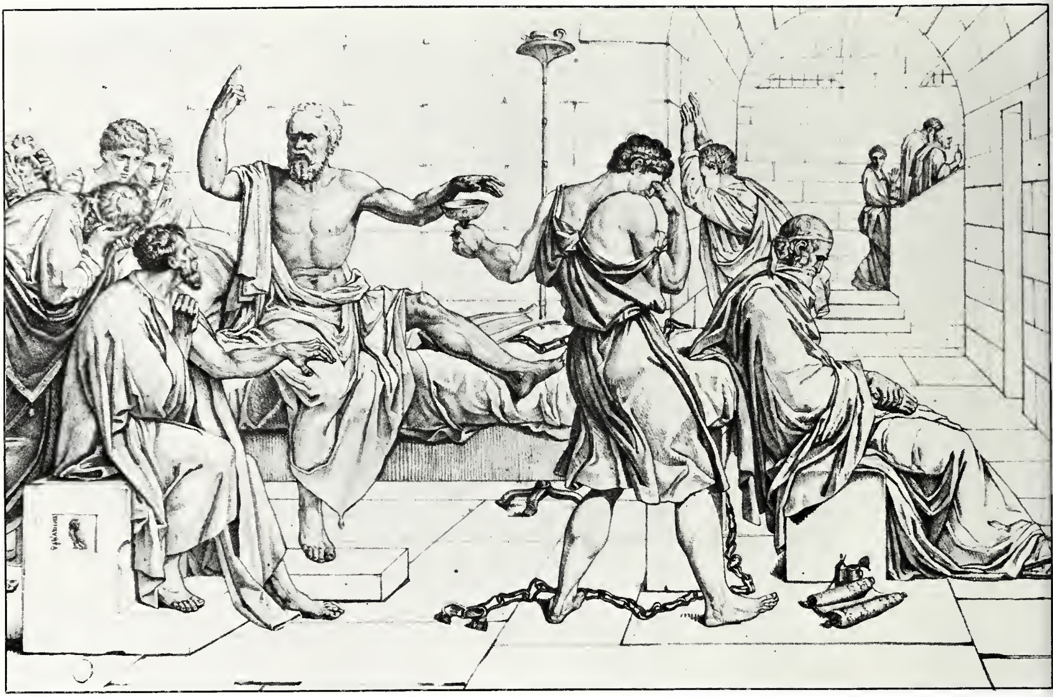


The Doctors' Scapegoats

The pharmacopoeia of witchcraft incorporated the common run of botanical recipes from woodland and hedgerow which were readily available to anyone with murder or abortion in mind. Deadly drugs were obtainable which could be dispensed to a client, the most notorious poisons being hemlock, hemp and henbane. In unskilful hands an aphrodisiac like cantharides could cause an agonizing death. Among the more general types of abortifacients were the potentially poisonous pennyroyal, rye ergot and oil of tansy. The function of these remedies for an unwanted pregnancy was to reduce the health of the mother to such an extent that the foetus would be expelled from her body. Should the mother die, however, as was often the case, the midwife was extremely vulnerable to a charge of murder or witchcraft, or both.

Renaissance physicians, not unnaturally, took every opportunity to cast the blame for their failures upon their unprofessional rivals, the witches; a policy for which there was ecclesiastical sanction, for the Inquisitor Bernard de Como had laid down the doctrine that all diseases beyond the curative power of medicine must be due to sorcery.

In view of the undeveloped state of medical knowledge in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, it was beyond the capacity of most physicians to determine what was or was not a poisonous substance. Mercury, arsenic and antimony were recognizably poisonous, but so it appears was air pollution; the demonologist William Perkins included in his category of witch crime that of attempting to murder the human race by poisoning the air. Plague-spreading was also classed as poisonous activity, the most notorious case of this kind occurring in Milan in 1630, when the Commissioner of Health of that city, who had been observed wiping his ink-stained hands on a wall, was



Mansell Collection

immediately denounced for spreading plague poison. Skilled questioning, reinforced by torture, secured a complete confession of guilt, together with the names of accomplices, and those responsible were torn with red hot pincers and burned at the stake. Despite the declaration of the French magistrate and witch-finder, Pierre de Lancre, that there were two types of witches (the poisoner belonging to a separate branch of the black art), there is little to indicate that poisoning and witchcraft were practised by different types of magician. The principal target of the poisoner's arts has always been the husband or wife who has outlived his or her desirability and usefulness, or the heir who stands between the poisoner and an inheritance. Women were the main offenders, as Reginald Scot makes clear in his *Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584), in which he declared 'women to have been the first inventors and practitioners of poisoning and more naturally addicted thereunto than men'.

Mass Murder and Black Magic

The English witch trials produced several instances of poisoning, or at least suggestions of this crime, usually of an unwanted spouse. A woman found guilty of murdering her husband was liable to suffer death at the stake for the crime of petit-treason. In 1652 the diarist John Evelyn witnessed the burning alive of a woman, sentenced for husband murder, on a blazing tar barrel at Smithfield before a vast crowd.

Of Witches' Poisons

The poisons used by witches are compounded and mixed from many sorts of poisons, such as the leaves and stalks and roots of plants; from animals, fishes, and venomous reptiles, stones and metals; sometimes these are reduced to powder and sometimes to an ointment. It must also be known that witches administer such poisons either by causing them to be swallowed, or by external application.

In the first instance they usually mix some poisonous powder with the food or drink: in the second they bewitch their victim, whether man or woman, while he is sleeping by anointing him with their lotions, waters, oils and unguents which contain many and various poisons. They anoint the thighs, or belly, or head, throat, breast, ribs, or some other part of the body of the person to be bewitched, who being asleep feels nothing; but such is the potency of that unguent that, as it is slowly absorbed by the heat of the sleeper's body, it enters his flesh and penetrates his vitals, causing him the greatest bodily pain...

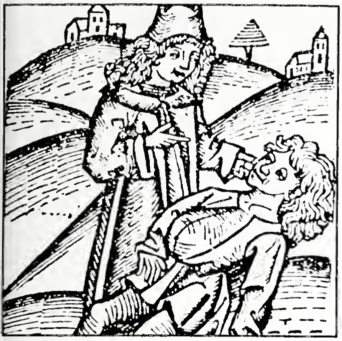
They have also a third method of administering poison, namely, by inhalation: and this is the worst of all kinds of poison, for by reason of its tenuity it is readily drawn in through the mouth and so quickly reaches the heart.

Guazzo, *Compendium Maleficarum*

A remarkable outbreak of mass poisoning associated with witchcraft, known as the Chambre Ardente case after the court which was set up by Louis XIV to investigate it, occurred in France towards the end of the 17th century. Poisons, love philtres and black magic rituals involving child sacrifice were resorted to by those who wished to be rid of an unwanted marriage partner or to secure the affections of a fickle lover.

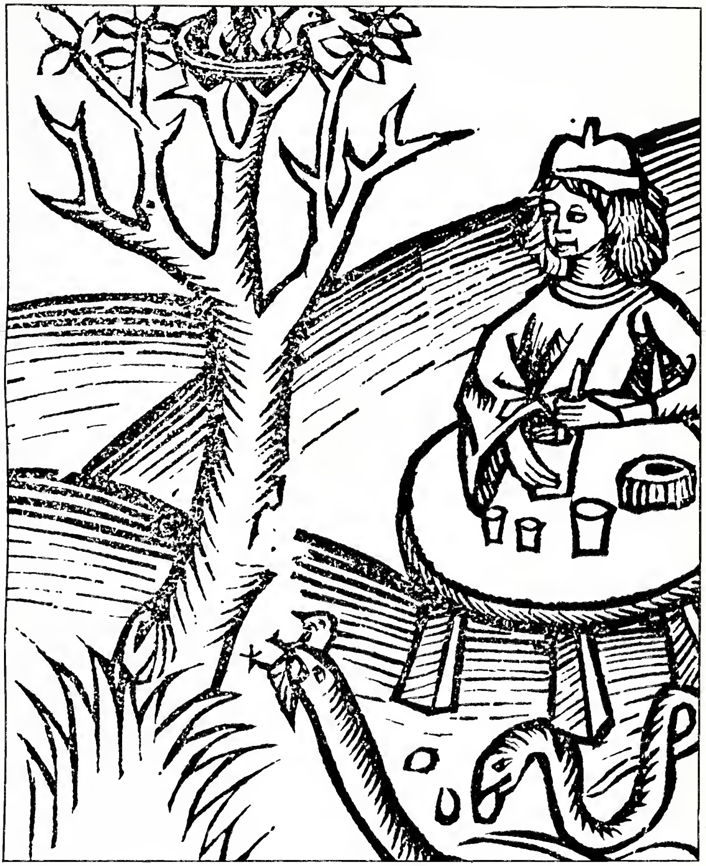
The affair came to light after a fortune teller named Marie Bosse had been overheard by a police agent to remark: 'What a lovely occupation is mine. Nothing lower than duchesses, marquesses, princes and lords. Three more poisonings and I'll retire. My fortune is made.' The ensuing investigation, which was accompanied by savage torture of many of the accused, uncovered a vast conspiracy which was said to involve the greatest in the land, notably the King's former mistress, Mme de Montespan (see also BLACK MASS).

A ring of poisoners had apparently supplied lethal potions to a network of witches and abortionists all over France, resulting in the murder of an unknown number of unwanted husbands, children and babies; some 2500 babies were said to have been disposed of, the bodies being secretly buried in a garden at Villencouve-sur-Gravois. In a typical case a wife who wanted to be rid of her elderly husband soaked his shirt in a preparation containing arsenic, which brought the skin up in blotches resembling syphilis. Affecting concern, she then dutifully treated these with salves which,



Ronan Picture Library

Facing page Among the poisons known in antiquity was hemlock, which Socrates drank after he had been found guilty of neglecting the officially accepted gods and inventing new ones: detail from a drawing by the French painter David *Above* A victim of poisoning could be cured by the application of the wondrous bezoar stone, which was found in the intestines of a snake or a goat: from a 15th-century German work *Right* Another supposed antidote against poison was the flesh of an egg-eating snake



Hulton Picture Library

instead of allaying the inflammation, introduced a slow poison.

The full investigation of the scandal revealed much that was criminal but more which, in the light of what is now understood about the role of torture in witchcraft interrogations, seems highly dubious. The confessions of the principal witch and abortionist Catherine Deshayes, known as La Voisin, and her confederates in Devil worship, child sacrifice and the performance of a Black Mass, were extracted only under barbaric torture. The nobles involved in the affair predictably escaped both torture and execution, but La Voisin, together with a considerable number of minor abortionists, poisoners and innocent people, suffered death at the stake.

The Chambre Ardente investigation was summarily brought to an end by the intervention of the King in 1680, and was followed by the outlawing of fortune tellers in France and the introduction of legal controls over poisons.

All advances in the art and mystery of the apothecary tended to place in the hands of the unscrupulous charlatan lethal substances, which could be turned to good account if he was prepared to take the risk of setting himself up as a poisoner. Simon Forman, a medical man of dubious reputation who retailed aphrodisiacs and lethal potions from his consulting rooms at Lambeth in London in the early years of the 17th century, was employed by Lady Essex for the twin purposes of rendering her husband sterile and her lover even more amorously inclined. Finding a certain Sir Thomas Overbury in the way of her intrigues, she conspired to poison him, with arsenic and cantharides, using as go-between a Mrs Turner who was afterwards hanged for the crime. Despite the exposure of the scandal, Lady Essex was too highly placed to be executed and, after a period in the Tower, received a pardon from the King.

In Harris's *Life of James I* there is a curious anecdote suggesting that the death of the King might be due to poisoning by arsenic, supplied by the fashionable London wizard Dr Lamb, a close associate of the Duke of Buckingham and known as the Duke's Devil. Lamb met his end at the hands of a ferocious London street mob who pursued him down Cheapside, howling 'The poisoner, the poisoner', and stoned him to death as a wizard. Lamb's assistant, Anne Bodenham, was later charged with witchcraft and supplying of arsenical poisons, and suffered death on the scaffold.

Death from a Poisoned Mind

In considering the role of toxic medicines in the pre-scientific era, one must take into account a point made by Christina Hole in her *Witchcraft in England*, that a poisonous thought can have as lethal an effect upon the mind as a poisonous substance; and that it is possible that the mere fear of poisoning might sometimes have been sufficient to bring about the death of a guilt-ridden husband. In discussing instances of modern African witchcraft, the missionary Mary Kingsley referred to the importance of the state of mind of the victim: 'That all witches act by means of poison alone would be too hasty a thing to say. I think we need hardly doubt that the African is almost as likely to die from a poisonous idea put into his mind as a poisonous herb into his food.' Village wise men and women continued to supply herbal abortifacients as late as the middle of the 19th century.

Works of medical jurisprudence published at this time indicate continuing resort to mercury, cantharide emetics and herbal potions in attempted abortions, measures which often resulted in the death of the mother. During the early years of the present century there were herbalists still to be found who were prepared to administer dubious abortifacients at a price. Although the herbalist witch was traditionally blamed for supplying the means to wives who wished to make away with their husbands, even after she disappeared from the social scene women continued to solve their marriage problems – without the help of witchcraft.

ERIC MAPLE

One of the oddest features about poltergeist outbreaks is not so much why they start as why, inexplicably, they stop; in considering the possible psychological origin, the author suggests that these occurrences should be regarded less as a disease than as an unconscious attempt on the part of the 'victim' at a cure

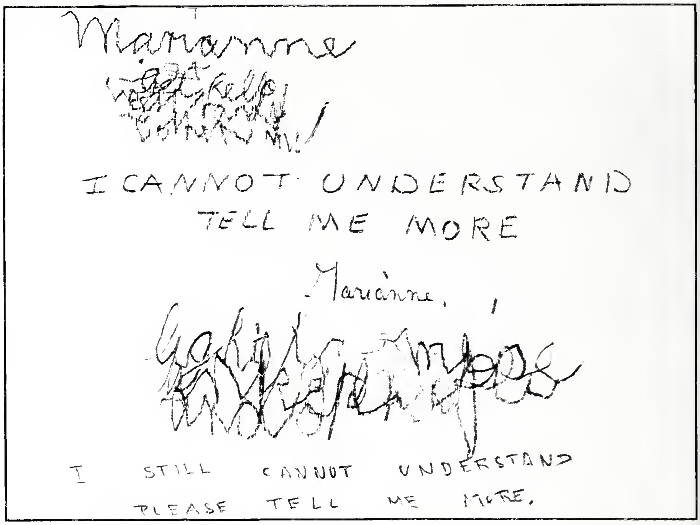
POLTERGEISTS

THE WORD POLTERGEIST was originally a German folklore term compounded from *polter* (a noise or racket) and *geist* (a spirit or sprite), indicating a Nature spirit of like status to elf or goblin or 'things that go bump in the night'. Subsequently the term acquired a wider sense. Phenomena ascribed to poltergeists included a remarkable variety of alleged happenings: movements of domestic objects, flinging of mud and stones, teleportation (the mysterious conveyance of articles into closed rooms), as well as the production of noises such as raps, bangs or scratchings, and sounds imitating the human voice whistling, singing or talking. Despite the fantastic nature of the phenomena serious investigators during the late 19th century, such as Frederic Myers, Frank Podmore, Andrew Lang and the criminologist Cesare Lombroso, thought them worthy of unbiased study. But in order not to prejudge the issue they tended to use the term poltergeist in an adjectival sense, descriptive merely of the type of happenings reported, which were said to constitute a 'poltergeist disturbance' or outbreak. This purely descriptive approach leaves open the question as to whether poltergeists exist as 'spirits' or discarnate entities, so that to begin with we are concerned only with poltergeist phenomena, real or alleged.

Not an Evil Spirit

Early writers on poltergeist outbreaks naturally offered many theories as to why they happened. The poltergeist was usually described vaguely as an evil spirit, without necessarily implying that it was one of Satan's own imps. Giraldus Cambrensis (1147-1223) refers to cases where mud was flung, holes cut in garments and a 'spirit' conversed with men in a somewhat aggressive and derisory fashion. His curiosity was aroused by the fact that rites of exorcism were ineffective, the priests themselves being subjected to insult. He concluded that sacraments are effective against true demons but not against merely mischievous ones. During the Reformation period, for theological reasons, writers tended to prefer either the demonic interpretation or explanation in terms of natural causes, ranging from death-watch beetles to the pranks of children or the trickery of adults.

Modern Spiritualism gained its first impetus in 1848 from an outbreak of rapping noises in the home of John Fox at Hydesville, a village in New York State. Subsequently there has been a tendency among Spiritualists to interpret poltergeist outbreaks as attempts at communication by the spirits of the dead.



Marianne

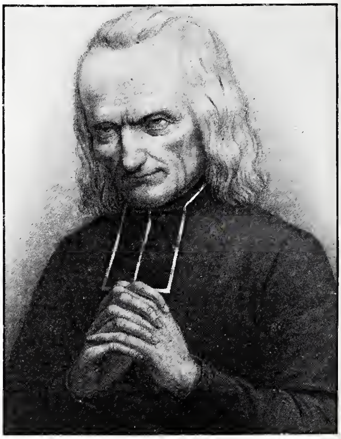
I CANNOT UNDERSTAND
TELL ME MORE

Marianne,

I STILL CANNOT UNDERSTAND
PLEASE TELL ME MORE.

Harry Price Library

Above **Scribblings made by an alleged poltergeist on a wall at Borley Rectory: the questions were written by Marianne Foyster, who lived there in the 1930s *Below left* Eleonore Zugrun, a Romanian medium, whose face was scratched by a 'spirit' which attacked her *Below right* The Curé of Ars, a victim of poltergeist phenomena**



Mansell Collection

In view of the fantastic happenings alleged in poltergeist cases and their speculative interpretations, there is naturally also a strong tendency to regard them as merely tall stories, or due to badly observed natural causes or trickery. Frank Podmore, who inclined to the view that poltergeist phenomena were the result of tricks by mischievous or maladjusted persons, laid down important criteria for assessing the evidential value of testimony in alleged poltergeist cases. Written statements from literate and intelligent observers providing circumstantial and mutually corroborative detail should be obtained as soon as possible after the occurrences. Nowadays the investigator likes also, if possible, to have video and tape-recordings, bearing in mind that such things can be faked and remembering that the reliability of a mechanical record is not, in the final analysis, greatly superior to that of the person who offers it in evidence. While mechanical records can be very informative (for example, in disposing of the possibility that the events are hallucinatory), in the end the investigator has to depend on the integrity of the witnesses. It is a typical and very puzzling feature of poltergeist outbreaks that they do not continue indefinitely. They may last only a few days or weeks. It is difficult therefore to get conclusive evidence; by the time an outbreak becomes known outside the immediate vicinity, it is likely to be over or on the decline. When the investigator arrives on the scene things may be quiet again and he has to depend on the testimony of others. Very often the witnesses are persons of intelligence and integrity but the investigator may hesitate to accept what they say at its face value if they are members of the disturbed household, because he may feel that they are inclined to 'back one another up' or are trying to shield a member of the family whom they suspect of trickery.

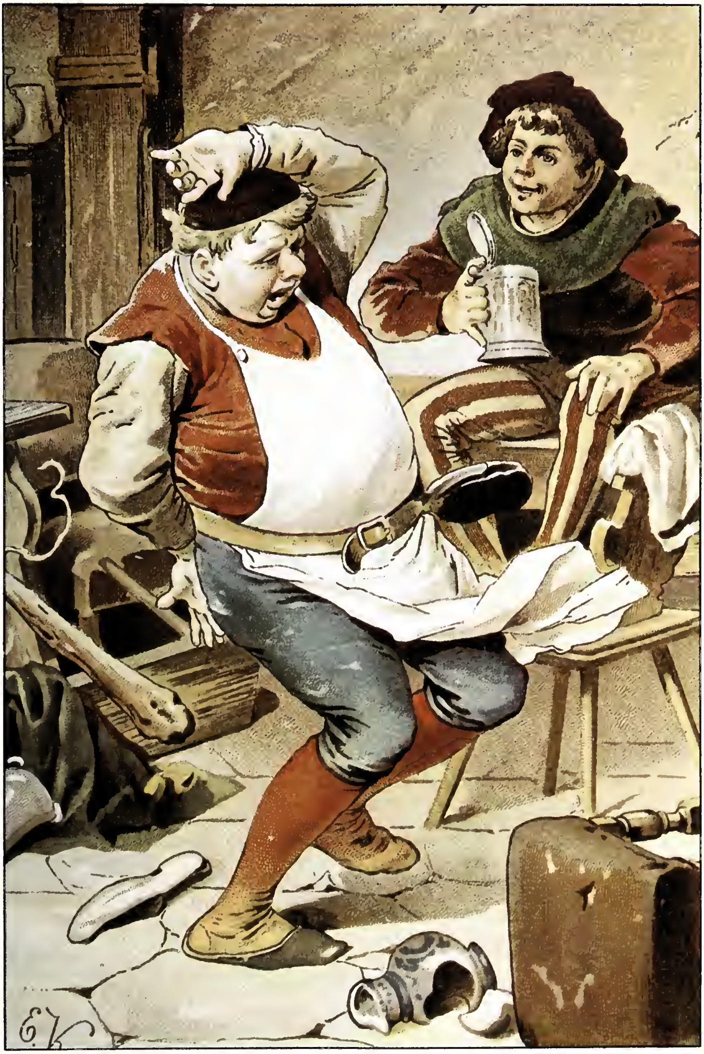
Strange Events at Tidworth

However, the investigator does not always arrive too late. Since the 17th century there have been eye-witness accounts by men of education, and independent of the family affected by the disturbance. In 1668 the Rev Joseph Glanvill, a scholar and philosopher of some distinction, published his own first-hand experiences of the 'drummer of Tidworth' in the house which then stood on the site of the present Zouche Manor at Tidworth in Wiltshire.

Mr Glanvill went upstairs and found 'two modest little girls in bed between seven and eleven years old'. A strange scratching sound seemed to come from behind the bolster. Glanvill exonerated the girls, whose hands were outside the bedclothes and, he says, 'made all the search that possible I could to find if there was any trick, contrivance or common cause of it, like did my friend but we could discover nothing...' Later, says Glanvill, 'I chanced to see as it had been something (what I thought was a rat or mouse) moving in a linen bag, that hung up against another bed... I stepped and caught it by the upper end with one hand, with which I held it, and drew it through the other, but found nothing at all in it. There was nobody near to shake the bag, or if there had, no-one could make such a motion which seemed to be from within, as if a living creature had moved in it.'

Glanvill's narrative seems eminently sensible and matter of fact. It was written in an era when superstition was still rife but, interestingly enough, reports of poltergeist cases were no more numerous than they are today. Out of 470 witchcraft trials in England only about five involved poltergeist activity; and since Glanvill's time only one or two poltergeist cases have been reported annually in Britain. This suggests strongly that assertions of poltergeist activity are independent of the current climate of opinion. Outbreaks sufficiently dramatic or prolonged to become widely known are clearly rather rare, and both the rarity and the short duration of poltergeist disturbances are hindrances to scientific investigation. Nonetheless there is an appreciable number of cases where it is very difficult to find a good reason for setting aside the testimony of eye-witnesses.

If there are genuine poltergeist cases in which these strange movements of objects occur, it raises challenging problems. At the least we have proof that there are physical forces at present unknown to science. Even if these forces should prove to be operated by 'spirits', or 'elementals', nonetheless they are physical forces as defined by the engineer, because to lift a mass of only an ounce requires a force of one ounce weight. The 'poltergeist force', if not generated 'supernaturally', may have a purely physiological origin. On the other hand, psychological factors may play a part in the genesis of this mysterious force.



Experience of objects moving 'of their own accord' may have contributed to folktales about magic sticks or clubs which jump up and beat people: illustration to 'The Three Tailors', one of the tales collected by the Brothers Grimm

Mansell Collection

The Phenomenon at First Hand

Any modern case with good witnesses is very exciting as it can cast some light on the mode by which the poltergeist force comes into play. It was the writer's privilege in 1961 to visit the scene of a poltergeist happening and obtain from no less than five first-class eye-witnesses written testimony based on their diary notes made only a few days before. In addition, the possibility of 'mass-hallucination' was ruled out, one of the witnesses having made a tape-recording of some of the poltergeist noises. As in so many poltergeist cases the phenomena were associated with a particular person.

The centre of the disturbance was a pretty little girl of 11 years of age, named Virginia. In the autumn of 1960 she was staying with her elder brother and his wife in Sauchie, a suburb of the town of Alloa on the river Forth in central Scotland. Virginia was a normal child, loved and cared for by her relatives, endowed with physical and mental health. At the time school tests showed her intelligence to be above average.

When Virginia went to bed on Tuesday 22 November 1960, a sound described as a 'thunking' noise, like a ball bouncing, sounded in her bedroom. When she came downstairs to complain, the sound followed her, sounding in the wall of the stairway, and then in the wall of the living room. As with all the subsequent manifestations, it ceased entirely when Virginia eventually fell asleep. At tea-time next day she was sitting in an armchair next to a sideboard. Her relatives saw the sideboard move out five inches from the wall and then return to its place. No one had touched it throughout.

Witnesses who were brought into the case in their professional capacities, and on whom special reliance may be placed, include the Rev T.W. Lund (Minister of Sauchie), Dr W.H. Nisbet and Dr William Logan (medical practitioners), Mrs Sheila Logan (Dr Logan's wife, also a qualified physician) and Miss Margaret Stewart, Virginia's class teacher at Sauchie school. Their statements are detailed and where they overlap are mutually corroborative. None of these witnesses was at all connected with the family or knew them other than slightly.

On Wednesday 23 November, when Virginia was in bed but still awake, the Rev Lund (who was called in about midnight) found that violent knocking sounds were coming from the bed-head in circumstances which proved that it was not being struck by Virginia or by anyone else. He gripped the bed-head and felt it vibrating as it sounded. He also noticed a linen chest raise itself slightly from the floor with an uneasy rocking motion, travel with a jerky kind of movement through a distance of about 18 inches along the floor and then go back to its starting point. Putting his hand on it, Mr Lund found the chest to be vibrating.

Attending Virginia's bedside on the following evening, Dr Nisbet heard knocking and a 'sawing noise'. He saw a peculiar rippling or puckering motion pass in a wave over the surface of the pillow. Later that night Mr Lund saw the pillow swing horizontally to a large angle from its proper position. Virginia's head was on one end of it but he saw no way by which she herself could cause this movement, by twisting her head or otherwise.

Virginia was kept at home until the Friday afternoon, when she returned to school. During a period of silent reading, her class teacher Miss Stewart saw Virginia trying to hold down the lid of her desk, which was forcing itself upward. It rose three times. Miss Stewart was able to see that Virginia was not pushing it up with her knees. A little later on, the boy sitting behind Virginia left his desk to fetch a book. Miss Stewart saw this empty desk rise bodily into the air. The motion was quite slow and the desk rose only an inch or so off the floor before settling down gently a little out of its original position. Miss Stewart, who had not yet heard of the events at Virginia's home, could not believe her eyes, but went straight to the spot and saw that no strings or mechanism were in operation.

Phenomena continued in Virginia's bedroom that night. Dr Nisbet heard spells of knocking even when Virginia was lying motionless and uncovered by bedding. He saw the linen chest (standing in isolation) move distances of about a foot. There were swingings of the pillow and ripples along the bedcover.

On Saturday night Dr Logan saw the puckerings of the coverlet and a rotary pillow movement. Sunday was peaceful, but activity recommenced at school on Monday morning. While Virginia was standing a little aside from Miss Stewart's desk with her hands clasped behind her back, a blackboard pointer lying on the desk started to vibrate, worked itself to the edge and fell off. Meanwhile the desk, a substantial object, vibrated and slewed itself round.

That evening, in the hope that a change of air might be salutory, Virginia was sent to stay with an aunt at the neighbouring town of Dollar. When Dr Nisbet visited he heard knockings, audible from outside the front door. On the following Tuesday Dr and Mrs Logan searched diligently for the source of noises ranging from gentle tappings to violent agitated raps. Unsuccessful in finding any normal cause for the sounds, they found that at one stage the noises seemed to be emanating from a point in mid-air near Virginia's bed.

Virginia returned to Sauchie on 30 November, when all stayed quiet. But the next evening was an active one. Rigging up lights and cine-camera, Dr Nisbet and Dr Logan tried to record on film some of the ripplings of the bedspread. But this proved difficult as the movements were of short duration. However a tape-recorder was kept running and collected sounds ranging from barely perceptible taps to agitated knocks emanating from a variety of apparent points of origin in the walls, floor and at times in mid-air. A persistent harsh, rasping noise often occurred simultaneously with the knockings. Meanwhile a service of intercession (not an exorcism), consisting of prayers and reading, was being held in the house, in the hope that it might do some good. As it happened, thereafter the poltergeist phenomena became muted and infrequent, dying out altogether in a few weeks.

A Diagnostic Case

To those unfamiliar with poltergeist cases this account may seem unbelievable. But there is no ground for setting aside any of the testimony, which has been recorded in much greater detail elsewhere. Poltergeist phenomena are a fact, and a very interesting one, although one that is not easy to assimilate to existing scientific knowledge. The Sauchie case illustrates the sporadic, unpredictable yet repetitive occurrence of the poltergeist phenomena. The repetition is very typical of many other published cases. As the testimony is both detailed and reliable the case happens to be a wonderfully 'diagnostic' one. It was clear that the happenings were connected only with Virginia and had nothing to do with the place where she might be. In brief, the Sauchie case is a particularly clear-cut example of a type of outbreak in which there is a complete correlation between the occurrence of poltergeist phenomena and a particular person whom we can describe as the 'poltergeist focus'. This correlation has far-reaching logical implications. For instance, it rules out the possibility that the events are random breakdowns in the laws of Nature, or the result of random fluctuations of atoms, and so on (see MIRACLES).

Fortean Picture Library

Poltergeist phenomena are usually associated with one particular person, often an otherwise healthy child or adolescent, as in the case at Sauchie in Scotland in 1960 (*top*), which involved strange noises and movement of objects. In the case of poltergeist activity at Mulhouse, France, in 1977-81, continuous temperature recordings showed inexplicable fluctuations in temperature (*above*)

When we ask if the phenomena are supernatural, we encounter the usual difficulties attaching to the term. Few people nowadays believe that poltergeists are imps called up by witches to harass their enemies. But what of the supreme Adversary himself? Many Roman Catholic devout, including the Curé of Ars (see CURE OF ARS), seem to have suffered persecutions similar to poltergeist doings, and some Catholic writers have regarded these assaults as diabolical miracles. The people who, in secular poltergeist cases, function temporarily as poltergeist foci tend to be decent and respectable, but they can hardly be said to be so religious or devout as to invite the attention of his infernal Majesty.

In problems of natural as opposed to supernatural causation, assistance may be gained from a helpful principle first enunciated by Hippocrates (c 460-380 BC), which may be called the principle of correlation.

Writing of epilepsy, a supposedly miraculous disease induced entirely at the will of the gods, he noted that it did not strike at random but was correlated with a certain type of person.

What kind of people are more likely to be the centre of a poltergeist upheaval? The present writer listed 27 cases in which the testimony seemed reasonably reliable and the events appeared to be associated with a particular individual. The poltergeist focus was female in 17 cases and male in the remaining ten. In 79 cases of varying evidential levels, there were 53 females to 26 males. Thus there is a sex-effect in poltergeist phenomena, but males are far from enjoying immunity.

There seems also to be a strong age-factor involved. In the 27 cases mentioned, most were aged between 10 and 20 years (though there were some notable exceptions). Of the foci in Gauld and Cornell's *Poltergeists*, 152 were under 20, and 42 were 20 or over. It seems therefore that poltergeist outbreaks do not occur randomly, but are correlated with juvenility and femininity, suggesting some obscure natural cause.

The Naturalistic Theory

Even if we acknowledge the presence of obscure natural causes as factors, we are still left with a serious logical choice to make, because the Spiritualistic type of explanation cannot be set aside without scientific reasons for so doing. The Spiritualist explanation assumes that the poltergeist focus is really a 'medium', a link or intermediary enabling a disembodied spirit to manifest its presence. On this view two elements are required for poltergeist phenomena; a spirit and a living medium. The Spiritualist explanation leaves many questions open. For instance, does the spirit itself move the objects, or merely endow the medium with the capacity to act at a distance (the faculty sometimes called psychokinesis)? An alternative explanation assumes that the poltergeist focus is herself, at least temporarily, capable of psychokinesis – usually without conscious intent or awareness of the fact. On this view there is no 'spirit' involved other than that of the living focus.

It would, of course, be improper to prefer the naturalistic explanation if, in the type of poltergeist case under discussion, there were definite indications of attempted communication from another world or from beyond the grave. However, in only a small proportion of cases is it alleged that the noises appear to take the form of coded raps. And even in these cases such communications as are inferred do not seem to be readily identifiable with such as we might expect from spirits of the dead, or even with coherent personalities. Apparitions are rare in poltergeist cases. There are some moderately well-evidenced cases, though only a few, in which the poltergeist (it is said) has carried on long conversations in human speech. Since speech is merely a form of sound these allegations are not necessarily preposterous, even though we cannot as yet place much reliance on them being true. However, such talking poltergeists as have been reported bring no important messages from other worlds. They are usually cheeky, flippant, fanciful and scatter-brained, and appear to have no stock of notions in any way different from those of the historical period in which they are manifested. This, for what it is worth, supports the concept of the poltergeist as a functioning of an unconscious part of a living human mind rather than as a messenger from the dead.

It needs to be stressed that the evidence against the Spiritualist hypothesis is of a purely negative kind. Nor do I wish to insist that deceased persons never communicate; a question which remains open. However, I think that the naturalistic explanation is to be preferred for poltergeist cases of the type under consideration, where the happenings centre on a poltergeist focus. On this theory the poltergeist individual herself activates physical forces of obscure origin. Because of their selective mode of application, these forces are not attributable to electricity, magnetism or gravitation, but are of a new kind. Also the forces show no especial affinity with those supposed to be productive of physical phenomena at mediumistic seances. Ectoplasm is conspicuously absent in poltergeist cases. Poltergeist phenomena rarely require darkness and are almost invariably observed in full light. In the few poltergeist cases where anything resembling a trance is reported, the phenomena, oddly enough, do not seem to happen during the trance but at other times.

On the naturalistic theory, should poltergeist studies be regarded as falling in the field of psychical research – as opposed to physics and physiology? Is there anything psychic about them? The answer is, yes. Poltergeist phenomena never centre on animals: no poltergeist cats and dogs are known. In addition, no phenomena occur when the poltergeist individual is in normal sleep. Thus the higher brain centres are in some way involved, and the problem can be seen as psycho-biological as well as physico-physiological. This suggests that it is profitable to look for psychological factors in causation.

Pubertal Changes

Sometimes emphasis has been placed on purely biological factors. Thus the juvenility of poltergeist individuals encouraged the distinguished parapsychologist Hereward Carrington, writing in 1930, to associate the phenomenon with puberty: 'An energy seems to be radiated from the body... when the sexual energies are blossoming into maturity... It would almost seem as if these energies instead of taking the normal course ... find this curious means of externalization.' Now I perceive in this remark the germ of a correct theory but it will not do as it stands. Admittedly it is a curious fact that many poltergeist foci do enjoy good physical health and their intelligence is at least average. However, the amount of energy used in poltergeist manifestations is quite trivial in relation to the normal physical activities of youth. Also Carrington's theory can hardly apply to cases of adult poltergeist individuals. Despite the fact that many poltergeist foci are in the age range ten to 20, it is by no means clear that the poltergeist disturbances coincide at all precisely with pubertal changes. However, there may be something to be said for a modified form of Carrington's theory, in which we think not of physiological energy but of emotional tension, which can occur both before and after puberty.

It is an interesting fact that although poltergeist individuals are in the main healthy, a few of them have suffered from curious fits. A careful examination of the case histories shows that these fits are not epileptic but something different – hysterical attacks.

One of the most interesting examples was that of 'Karin N.' who lived in a house in the middle of a forest in southern Sweden – for the very good reason that in 1897 she had married Mr N., an Inspector of Forests. In 1905 Karin, then aged 27, was investigated by Dr Hjalmar Wijk and Dr Paul Bjerre. Karin was basically healthy and of strong physical constitution, but the marriage was childless and from 1898 Karin exhibited various neurotic symptoms. These took the form of fainting fits, which sometimes occurred several times a day. A fit would be preceded by a violent and unconquerable feeling of anxiety which ceased when the fit commenced. During the fit Karin's arms, and sometimes her whole body, would tremble. She would then lie in a paroxysm of tears and laughter with partially veiled consciousness, incapable of voluntary speech or motion. From May 1904 the villa which Karin and her husband occupied was agitated by mysterious knockings, occurring (as is typical of many poltergeist cases) in the evenings when Karin was in bed but not asleep. Karin's illness was correctly diagnosed as hysteria, a condition in which the patient is truly ill but totally ignorant of the real cause of his or her illness, which is psychological and locked away in the unconscious inner part of the mind.

Hysterical 'Absences'

Karin is not, by far, the sole instance of a poltergeist focus with a hysterical illness. Hysterical fits, faints and comas were characteristic of Floralina in India in 1897, of Mary Langdon at Youghal near Cork in 1661, and of Germaine Maire at Nancy, France, in 1910, who suffered from transitory losses of full consciousness which could well have been hysterical 'absences'. Esther Cox, the heroine of the sensational poltergeist haunting at Amherst, Nova Scotia, in 1878, was said to swell visibly, signifying the occurrence of hysterical meteorism, or aerophagy, in which air is sucked involuntarily into the stomach.

About 1867, a servant-girl in Boston named Mary Carrick was pursued by raps on the walls of any room where she was working and quite heavy objects would move in her presence. Knockings occurred by her bedside while she slept – in apparent exception to the rule that a waking state is necessary. But she would cry out and stir agitatedly in her sleep, which was also not normal on these occasions. In fact Mary was a somnambulist. She would rise in the night and do housework while sleep-walking.

About 1840 Mary Jobson of Sunderland had pains in the head, abdominal swelling, convulsive fits and insensitivity in regions of the skin. Then she became blind, deaf and dumb. Poltergeist phenomena ensued: throwings of water and violent knockings. The illness was not mortal, and she had a sudden recovery, which amply confirms a diagnosis of hysteria. Angelique Cottin, investigated by the French Academy of Science in 1846, had some symptoms also reconcilable with hysteria. Her left arm was at a raised temperature; it trembled and was easily put into a muscular spasm.

It would be wrong to suggest that all poltergeist foci are or have been hysterical. Indeed the majority show no sign of this or any other psychological ailment. But the proportion of markedly hysterical persons is certainly high among poltergeist foci as compared with a random sample of the general population. This suggests rather forcibly that poltergeist happenings, like hysteria, are psychologically triggered. We must suppose also that the psychological mechanism which precipitates a poltergeist outbreak involves some of the same factors as are encountered in the production of a hysterical illness.

Hysteria and dissociative reactions constitute only one group of a class of ailments known as neuroses. Neuroses have no organic cause; they are psychological illnesses, and a neurotic has no derangement of his mind or reason. One kind of neurosis is the anxiety attack, spells of 'free-floating' dread such as Karin had before her fits. Betsy Bell of Tennessee, the centre of elaborate poltergeist events in 1817, seems not to have been hysterical but to have suffered from the 'hyper-ventilation syndrome', in which the victim faints from temporary oxygen-poisoning. It was following these fainting fits that the Bell poltergeist activity would begin each evening. It is tempting to suppose that in some way the poltergeist phenomena relieved Betsy's anxiety. In Karin's case her anxiety was relieved by her hysterical fits. As we say: the anxiety was 'converted' into the hysterical symptoms. We can therefore hazard the guess that for Karin there were two forms of relief of anxiety, conversion into hysterical symptoms on the one hand and poltergeist activity on the other. In each case the process would be an unconscious one.

Are poltergeist phenomena therefore manifestations of a conversion neurosis? Is anxiety converted into noises and flinging of objects? This temptingly simple theory is not quite adequate. Unless relieved suddenly by one of the 'miracle' cures so typical of this field, hysterical conversion symptoms tend to be durable.

Looked at from this point of view, the mystery of poltergeist activity is not so much why it starts as why it usually stops. We could liken it to a mild infection such as chickenpox, from which the victim usually recovers in a week or two. It runs its course like a fever. And fever is not so much the disease itself as the body's effort at cure. Pursuing this analogy, we might guess that poltergeist phenomena start and eventually terminate because they are not a disease but the cure.

'Blowing Off Steam'

In 1895 Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer published a series of papers entitled *Studies on Hysteria* in which they sought for a scientific theory of how hysteria comes about. Much of what they said is directly applicable to the poltergeist problem.

In all human beings there is a natural tendency to keep the emotional tension (or 'excitation' as Freud called it) down to a moderate level. A surplus of excitement is disturbing and the individual therefore has a variety of means for dissipating it. Sometimes this can be achieved in a direct way. Love or anger can be subdued by erotic activity or by taking revenge. Life is not always so simple, but fortunately there is another mechanism which is usually effective. This is the 'wearing away' or erosion of the excitation, which takes place by a process of intellectual activity, 'cooling off' by thinking around the situation or 'talking it over', even if only with oneself.

In addition, Freud and Breuer drew attention to a third normal mechanism, 'working-off', for disposing of the charge of emotional tension. This mode of reducing tension employs physical activity and tends to occur in an automatic and instinctive fashion. When fearful or enraged or in mental or physical pain, we are apt to tense our muscles, pace the floor, utter lamentations or curses, or indulge in sobs and tears. These activities are often quite pointless as regards improving the objective situation, but popular wisdom acknowledges their role in reducing tension by such proverbial phrases as 'blowing off steam' or 'crying oneself out'.

The physical activity, or 'working-out', is itself a substitute for direct fulfilment. According to Freud and Breuer, when Bismarck, the German Chancellor, had to suppress angry feelings in the king's presence he would subsequently resolve the tension created by smashing an expensive vase upon the floor. A similar delayed or surrogate reaction is sometimes observed in small but generally well-behaved children who occasionally astonish their elders by sudden and isolated acts of vandalism accompanied by no outward sign of temper or irritation.

This brings us close to the psychological meaning of poltergeist activity. I believe that it is a 'working-off' of emotional tension. There is some reason to believe that it happens by an unconscious process, because the poltergeist focus usually seems to have no conscious control over the happenings and only the dimmest awareness that she or he is responsible for them. This suggests that the phenomena occur in those most liable to psychological repression; which squares with the fact that many actual hysterics are represented among poltergeist foci. Of course, more elaborate features may be superimposed on the process and the form of the manifestation (like the symptoms of hysteria and other neuroses) may be capable of having a symbolic content reflecting the specific emotional issues involved. This theory, while explaining several of the curious features of poltergeist phenomena, of course sheds no light on the physical nature of the poltergeist force, and little light on the mysterious age factor

A.R.G.OWEN

FURTHER READING: A.R.G. Owen, *Can We Explain the Poltergeist?* (Garrett, 1964); Harry Price, *Poltergeist Over England* (Country Life, London, 1945); A. Gauld & A. D. Cornell, *Poltergeists* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979); Herbert Thurston, *Ghosts and Poltergeists* (Folcroft, 1977); W.G. Roll, *The Poltergeist* (Nelson Doubleday, 1972); Colin Wilson, *Poltergeist!* (New English Library, 1981); Loyd Auerbach, *ESP, Hauntings and Poltergeists: A Parapsychologist's Handbook* (Warner Books, 1986); D. Scott Rogo, *On the Track of the Poltergeist* (Prentice-Hall, 1986).

The Offensive Perriwig

An account of the Daemon of Spraiton in the County of Devon, Anno. 1682.

One time the young mans head was thrust into a very strait place, betwixt a Beds head, and a Wall, and forced by the strength of divers men to be removed thence, and that not without being much hurt, and bruised, so that much blood appeared about it: upon this, it was advised he should be bleeded, to prevent any ill accident that might come of the bruise; after bleeding, the ligature, or binder of his Arm was removed from thence, and conveyed about his middle, where it was strained with such violence, that the girding had almost stopp'd his breath, and kill'd him, and being cut asunder, it made a *strange and dismal noise*, so that the standers by were affrighted at it. At divers other times he hath been in danger to be strangled with Cravats, and Handkerchiefs, that he hath worn about his Neck, which have been drawn so close, that with the sudden violence he hath near been choaked, and hardly escaped death.

The Spectre hath shewed great offence at the Perriwigs which the young man used to wear, for they are often torn from his head after a very strange manner, one, that he esteemed above the rest, he put in a small box, and that box he placed in another, which he set against the wall of his Chamber, placing a Joint-stool, with other weight, a top of it; but in short time the boxes were broken in sunder, and the Perriwig rended into many small parts and tatters:

Another time, lying in his Masters Chamber, with his Perriwig on his Head, to secure it from danger, within a little time it was torn from him, and reduced into very small fragments. At another time one of his Shoe-strings was observed (without the assistance of any hand) to come of its own accord out of his shoe, and fling itself to the other side of the Room; the other was crawling after it, but a Maid espying that, with her hand drew it out, and it strangely *clasp'd*, and *curl'd* about her hand like a living Eel...

Richard Bovet
Pandaemonium

The religious ideas of the Polynesians were sophisticated, complex and poetical; both they and the Micronesians believed that the islands on which they lived had been drawn up from the sea by semi-divine fishermen

POLYNESIA AND MICRONESIA

THE ORIGIN of the Polynesians and Micronesians, who people almost every speck of inhabitable land in the Pacific north and east of Melanesia, (see MELANESIA), has been argued since Captain Cook's voyage of discovery in the 18th century. The evidence shows that their ultimate links are with Asia, but recent research suggests that they became a distinct group in the area of eastern Melanesia and western Polynesia, and then spread eastwards to the central groups and north to Hawaii, south-east to Easter Island and south-west to New Zealand (see MAORI). The Micronesians, especially in the west, have been influenced by later immigrations from Asia.

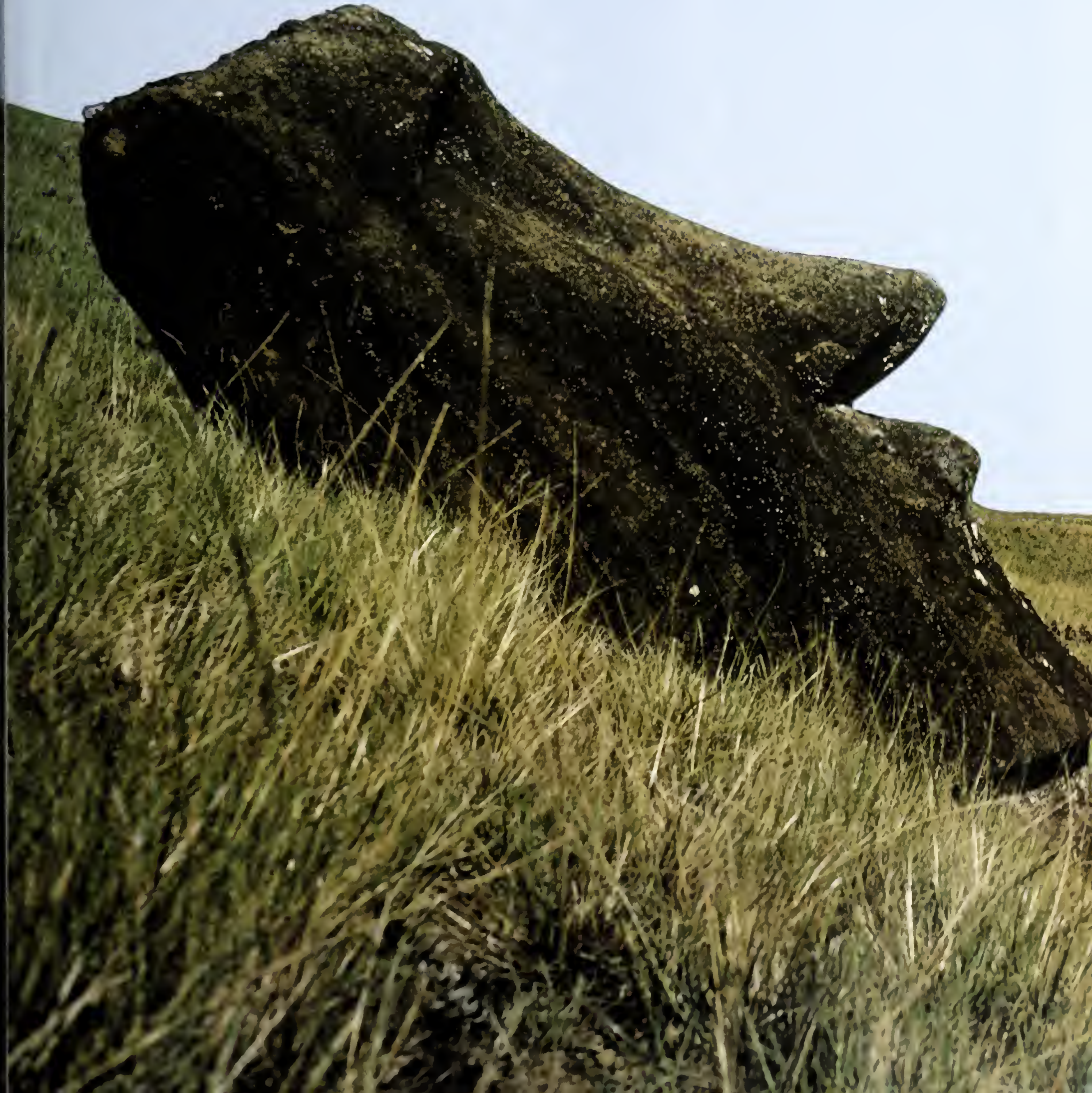
The history of these peoples is very relevant in a religious context. When it was believed that they left Asia as a distinct ethnic group, it was natural to look for origins of their religion and mythology among the ancient Asiatic civilizations: their metaphysical ideas were compared with those of the Vedic Aryans, for instance. Now interest centres as much on the relationship of their ideas with those of the Melanesians, with whom they seem to share a common origin.

Like the Melanesians, the Polynesians when whites discovered them were at a 'Neolithic' cultural level, using ground stone or shell for their cutting tools. In most of the islands they subsisted mainly by gardening but, especially on the small atolls, they also depended heavily on the sea.

Their religious and metaphysical ideas

Head of one of the colossal stone images on Easter Island; these figures, weighing up to 50 tons, were cut from compressed ash quarried from the crater of an extinct volcano. They represent ancestors, and stood in burying-places

P. Beighton



were, by comparison with their simple material culture, sophisticated, complex and poetical. All Polynesians had myths about the beginning of the world. Some feature a deity who is the Creator, others emphasize an evolutionary sequence. In Tonga and Samoa the Creator was Tangaloa (Tangaroa, Ta'aroa), who existed alone above a vast expanse of water. He threw down a stone, which became land, and gave his bird-messenger a vine to plant. The vine withered and rotted, and in the decomposing matter grew a swarm of maggots which became men and women.

Ta'aroa also seems to have been the Creator in the Society Islands. According to Tueira Henry, author of *Ancient Tahiti*, '. . . Ta'aroa sat in his shell in darkness from eternity. The shell was like an egg revolving in endless space, with no sky, no land, no sea, no moon, no sun, no stars. All was darkness, it was continuous thick darkness . . .' The notion of an original void, or chaos, in which there was nothing material or tangible, is common.

Whatever its origin, once created the world evolved. At first the sky father and the earth mother lay embraced, and their offspring, the gods, were born into the darkness between them. Finally one (often Tane) decided to separate them, and thrust the sky up into its present position, allowing light into the world. Evolution often proceeds by a series of procreative acts, pairs of personified abstractions producing offspring unlike themselves, but there is also an idea of continuous growth and development.

Most of the great gods are found throughout Polynesia, but their names and attributes differ in the various groups, and some islands had deities unknown elsewhere. The New Zealand Maori seem to have had a supreme Creator called Io. The name occurs again (as Ihoiho) in Tahiti. One has to distinguish between Io as a true Creator of all things, and the gods who bring order out of chaos. Tangaroa was especially the god of the sea, but in the outlying groups became of minor importance, sometimes as a forest god.

Tane was primarily a sky god, of special importance in the Society and Cook Islands and in Hawaii. He was also lord of the forest and, as a result, the patron of woodworkers. In Mangaia, one of the islands in the Cook archipelago, his symbol was a stone-bladed adze, into which he was believed to enter on ceremonial occasions. In some mythologies he created woman and was regarded as the life-giving force.

Tu (Ku in Hawaii) was a war god. In the Society Islands he was associated with Ta'aroa in the creation myths, but his function as war god was usurped by Oro, a son of Ta'aroa, who became the supreme deity. But in Hawaii Ku, in various forms, was supreme.

Rongo was widely known in central and eastern Polynesia, alternative forms of his name being Lono in Hawaii, and Ono in the Marquesas Islands. He was an agricultural god, in whose honour harvest festivals were celebrated; he was also patron of singing and music. In a Hawaiian legend he sailed away, overcome with grief at the death of his wife, but promised to return one day in a canoe laden with food. The Hawaiians took Captain Cook for the returning Lono, and their disillusion led to his death.

Goddesses were of less importance. Hina or Hine appears in many forms. According to the Maori tale, Tane created Hine from the sand of the sea-shore as a mate for himself, and took their daughter Hine-Titama, the dawn maiden, as his wife. When she discovered their dual relationship she fled to Po, the underworld, and so originated death. Hine in her different aspects was the goddess of death and the underworld and, as the first woman, a source of fertility. She was also associated with the moon and with women's crafts.

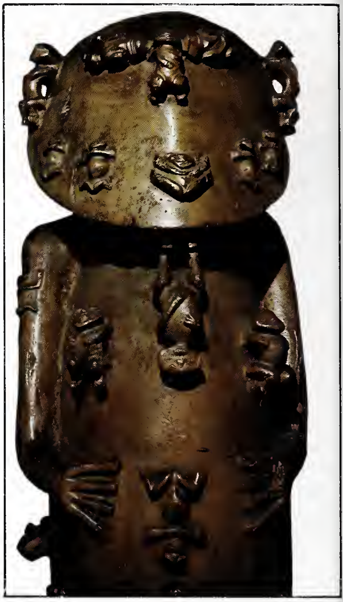
Keeping the Blood Pure

The great gods were too remote to take much interest in the daily affairs of ordinary people, which were the concern of numerous lesser deities: local or family gods, or those who watched over certain crafts or activities. Some were sons or descendants of the great gods, others were deified ancestors. The two classes merged, for chiefs were themselves descended from gods.

The Polynesians felt that all creation – gods, mortals and Nature – was one. Natural and supernatural were equally real, and equally significant, aspects of experience. The whole of creation was pervaded by a force, *mana* (see MANA), which showed itself in power, efficacy, success, skill, fruitfulness, prowess. It was beneficial if rightly directed, but always dangerous. Religion was concerned with controlling and directing mana, with increasing it where it was needed, with shielding man from its dangers. The moral content in Polynesian religion was slight. What mattered was not probity or standards of conduct but the correct performance of ritual. Breaches of custom might offend the gods and be punished, but punishment could be averted by offerings. There is no clear distinction between religion and magic, since both aim to control and make use of mana, though in general religion works for social ends whereas the aims of magic would often be considered antisocial.

Chiefs were directly descended from the gods, and were therefore charged with mana. A chief who was descended from a god through an unbroken line of oldest sons was not only the senior in a political or social sense; he also possessed the most potent mana. The mana of a chief was the mana of his people, as he was the main link between his tribe and the gods and the non-physical world. Because any diminution of this force was a matter of general concern, it was essential that the blood be kept pure. A Hawaiian chief of the senior line therefore married his sister.

The chief had obligations to his people as well as autocratic power over them. He had to ensure that his mana was not diminished and that commoners did not come to harm by accidental contact with it. The consequent restrictions could be extremely onerous.



Figures representing gods or spirits are common in Polynesia: this wooden image from the Austral Islands shows Tangaroa, a Creator and sea god, in the act of creating gods and men

One of the means by which mana was manipulated, and danger from it avoided, was the institution called taboo (see TABOO). The word covers a number of related concepts. A chief and anything connected with him were taboo, because contact was dangerous (often fatal) to his inferiors and because at the same time it diminished his mana and therefore that of his people. This kind of taboo was automatic and unavoidable; but a chief could use his mana positively to impose a taboo, on a place, an activity, the consumption of a certain food.

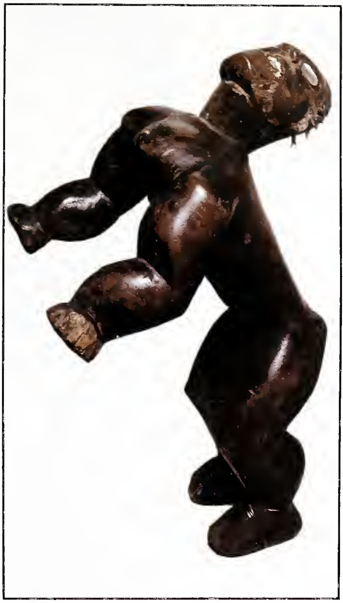
These taboos derived from sacredness. Another type derived from pollution. Women, especially, were charged with this kind of power; their reproductive organs and functions were the greatest danger to sacredness. Death, sickness and women (especially at childbirth and menstruation), were contaminating; all who came into contact with them were in peril. At childbirth and periodically, therefore, women retired to special huts in the bush.

A man contaminated in this way, or by contact with excessive mana, could be restored to a state of *noa*, or normality, by ritual and by means of the cleansing agents, fire and water. In the same way a crop which had been under taboo, or a new canoe or house which acquired mana during the making, had to be made noa before they became free for general use.

The Polynesian sense of the unity of all creation probably explains the licence which characterized certain harvest festivals, and the performances of societies of entertainers such as the Arioi of Tahiti.

Axel Poignant

Two-headed figure from Tahiti; images representing ancestral spirits or minor deities were frequently the familiars of sorcerers, who derived their powers from the spirits



C. M. Dixon

Dances celebrating the unity of all creation were a feature of certain Polynesian harvest festivals; wooden figure, from Hawaii, depicting a dancer passing into a trance

These were religious in nature and consisted of recounting creation myths, singing, drumming, miming and dancing. As they proceeded they became more and more erotic, the tempo accelerated, and finally all present (or in some accounts, only the lower grades) succumbed to a frenzy of sexual abandon. The gods were believed to be present enjoying these performances, and as the people copulated so did the gods, and all Nature was fructified.

Unlike the Melanesians, the Polynesians had specialist priests who varied in grade and function, though on great occasions the chief himself often officiated. The temple priests, often of noble rank, were in charge of ritual. They presented sacrifices to the gods, conducted ceremonies, released from taboo those who had come into contact with divinity. They were the repositories of sacred learning, and some groups ran schools in which chiefs' sons were instructed in the sacred lore. The second kind were the inspirational priests, subject to possession by their god who spoke through them. They were consulted before all important enterprises. Others, considered inferior, were mediums who were able to contact spirits, and who were consulted in case of sickness, to detect thieves and on similar occasions.

The presence in most of Polynesia of temples or sacred enclosures is another point of difference from Melanesia. In Tonga and Samoa the graves of chiefs served the purpose, but in the eastern groups temples were more elaborate. The Society Islands had family, district and royal temples, and temples associated with occupations such as canoe-building and fishing. They often had stone platforms, superimposed and stepped back at each level, and a walled forecourt. A stepped platform in Tahiti was 44 feet in height. Some temples in Hawaii and Tahiti provided sanctuary for criminals, or refugees in time of war.

Fickle Gods

Figures representing gods or spirits, many of them important deities, are found widely in Polynesia. In the Marquesas and on Easter Island they represent ancestors, and the figures in human form from Tahiti also seem to be of ancestral spirits or perhaps minor deities, in many cases the familiars of sorcerers. In this island the great gods were represented by blocks of wood covered with closely-plaited coconut-fibre cord set with red feathers, red being the sacred colour. These figures were not in themselves sacred, but became so when the god or spirit descended into them. Nor did they necessarily represent the deity's actual appearance. In some islands gods were symbolized by paddles, clubs or intricately-carved batons.

In ritual, forms of words were all-important. Exactness was essential; any error not only made the ceremony ineffective but could endanger the life of the priest. This was especially so when, as sometimes happened, the ritual consisted of repeating the precise words of the god.

Ritual was almost always accompanied by sacrifice. First-fruits — from the gardens, or of fish when a new season began – were offered to the god whose creatures they were, as an act of conciliation. Pigs were commonly sacrificed on important occasions, but at a family meal the offering would be merely a few morsels of food.

In Tahiti and the Marquesas human sacrifices were made before a war, and in Hawaii when an image of Ku or a new war canoe was made. The Hawaiians also placed a victim at the foundation of a sacred building. It seems that the soul, tied to the site by ritual and by the presence of the body, became a guardian spirit.

The fickleness of Polynesian gods is illustrated by the Tahitian practice of making offerings near a besieged enemy to lure his gods away. A deity's followers were equally fickle: a god who failed his people would be abused, insulted and abandoned. This perhaps explains the changes in function and status of deities, and the willingness with which most Polynesians adopted Christianity.

The Sorcerer and the Soul

The Polynesians believed that the soul could leave the body without causing immediate death, and that dreams were the experiences of the wandering soul. In sickness it could be caught and restored by experts, but it might also be trapped by enemies. In Pukapuka, an atoll of the Cook group, a priest whose god had been offended would make a trap consisting of a series of coconut-fibre rings and suspend it from a tree over the offender's house. If a bird or insect flew through one of the rings the offender's soul was captured.

Sorcerers had other means of destroying people by attacking their souls. Hair, nail-parings, or fragments of food left by the victim could be burnt or buried with magical objects, and his soul would then be extinguished. The sorcerer could also send an evil spirit to attack his soul.

Sickness could be sent by a god to punish a transgression, or by discontented spirits of the dead who had not been accorded the usual ceremonies. In either case a propitiatory rite and an offering might bring about a cure. Since the progress of the soul to the next world, and its status and survival there, depended on rites performed by the living, it was justifiably annoyed by neglect.

Sorcerers derived their power from spirits or used them as their agents. In Hawaii a sorcerer could create his own powerful familiar. The body of a dead person was obtained, the bones and hair preserved, and regular offerings made to the spirit to build up its power. Such a familiar might destroy its creator if it was not regularly sustained by offerings.

After death the ghost soon began its journey to the land of the dead. Usually this was to the west, and most islands had a place at the western end from which souls were thought to leave. In western Polynesia the afterworld was called Pulotu, but in the eastern groups it was often Hawaiki, the homeland. The souls of commoners, or those for whom the rites had been omitted, often failed to overcome the dangers of the journey or to survive for long in the afterworld, but chiefs and eminent people could expect immortality.

Figures in the temple coutyard of Honaunau, Hawaii, where the deified bones of chiefs were at one time buried; it was also a sanctuary for criminals and for refugees in time of war

Axel Poignant

Apart from cosmogonic myths, there are many tales about the adventures of heroes and heroines, about the pranks of tricksters, about ogres and demons. A favourite hero, often regarded as a demigod, is Tahaki. He is the epitome of the great chief: brave, resourceful, handsome, full of mana, gracious and at ease, proud but patient. He has his faults: he is occasionally foolish, and his numerous love affairs do not always go easily.

Tahaki's grandson Rata is a hero of a different kind, a great seaman and adventurer, headstrong, quick-tempered, determined. His mother, Tahiti Tokerau, was abducted by one Puna, who plucked out her eyes to serve as lights and buried her head downwards in the sand so that her feet could be supports for the baskets of Puna's wife. When Rata grew up he decided to rescue his mother. He built a great canoe with the aid of wood spirits, who were at first angered by his cutting down a tree, but relented when they heard of his project. Finally, after numerous adventures, overcoming monstrous guardians and other dangers, he slew Puna and released Tahiti Tokerau.

Probably the most popular hero was Maui. Born prematurely and discarded by his mother, he was rescued and reared by the gods. After learning everything they could teach him, he rejoined his mortal family. The stories of his adventures are innumerable. Many of his escapades are simply tricks or jokes, in which he makes the pompous or the great appear ridiculous, or outwits the clever. But some of his greatest feats were of benefit to man. He lassoed the sun, and so gave people the day as we know it, with time to work and cook meals. He stole fire, which man had lacked.

His last adventure, though it led to his death, was his greatest: he tried to save humanity from having to die. Accompanied by his friends the birds he sought out Hina, the goddess of death. He found her asleep. Warning his companions to keep silent so as not to wake her, he attempted to kill her by crawling between her thighs into her body and emerging from her mouth. When only his legs were still visible the ridiculous sight was too much for the wagtail, which let out an uncontrollable chuckle. Hina awoke, closed her legs, and Maui was crushed.

Micronesian Religion

The mythology and the religious and magical ideas of Micronesia form a less cohesive and clear-cut pattern than those of Polynesia. Cosmogonic myths are relatively unimportant. Certain groups had a Creator being, and the concept of an original chaos or void, but many Micronesians seem to have regarded the world as always existing: the task of the Creators was to make it habitable. Stories of the separation of earth and sky are fairly common. As in Polynesia, islands were drawn up from the sea by semi-divine fishermen, whose names are sometimes variants of Maui.

Ancestor worship seems to have been a more conspicuous element in religion than it was in Polynesia. Supernatural beings who were not of human origin were less prominent in cult, and their spheres were less clearly defined.

Everywhere sacrifices and offerings were made, but human sacrifice was apparently absent. Ritual, and the priesthood, were less highly developed; and possession by a god was unusual, though there were mediums who communicated with the spirits of the dead or with lesser deities. Representations of gods or spirits were rather rare.

In general chiefs were not considered sacred and, though they were treated with great respect, their powers were more limited than in Polynesia. As a result the belief that danger could be caused by contact with a chief's mana was not strongly held, though a chief could impose taboos. Mana seems to derive more from a personal relationship with a spirit than from the universal power of gods and Nature, as in Polynesia.

B.A.L.CRANSTONE

FURTHER READING: Katharine Luomala, *Voices on the Wind* (Bishop Museum Press, 1955); Roslyn Poignant, *Oceanic Mythology* (Hamlyn, 1967); for a penetrating general analysis of taboo customs, F. Steiner, *Taboo* (Penguin, 1968); for discussion of religious ideas, R. W. Williamson, *Religion and Social Organization in Central Polynesia* (AMS Press reprint); for the Polynesian view of the supernatural, E. S. C. Handy, *Polynesian Religion* (Kraus reprint).

PONTIUS PILATE

IF PONTIUS PILATE had not sentenced to crucifixion a Galilean Jew who became the Saviour God of Christianity, he would be known today only to a few students of ancient history. But that fateful sentence has caused his name to be remembered down the centuries.

To understand Pilate's curious fortune in legend, it is necessary first to know what history tells about him. Except for one broken inscription and a few coins, our knowledge of Pilate comes from three sources: Philo, a Jew of Alexandria who was a contemporary of Pilate's; Josephus, a Palestinian Jew who was born a year after Pilate left Judaea in 36 AD; and the four Christian gospels, which date respectively from about 71 to 100 AD.

But these sources, although they are close in time to the events they relate, are all strongly motivated by interests other than historical accuracy in their accounts of Pilate. Both Philo and Josephus were Jewish apologists, concerned to show the Roman government of their day that the Jews were a loyal and peaceable people, whom bad Roman governors had provoked. The authors of the gospels were moved by a very different interest. They sought to explain Pilate's condemnation of Jesus by making the Jewish leaders responsible for the charge of sedition on which he was executed (see JESUS).

From the somewhat tendentious evidence of Josephus, whose writings are our chief source of information, it can be ascertained that Pontius Pilate was appointed governor of Judaea in 26 AD and continued in office until 36. His title, as an inscription found in 1961 shows, was '*praefectus* of Judaea'. As praefectus he was responsible for maintaining Roman rule in the region.

Both Philo and Josephus represent Pilate as inherently hostile to the Jews, and as deliberately seeking to violate Jewish religious law and institutions. But on critical analysis these accounts reveal inconsistencies and improbabilities that render their testimony gravely suspect.

Assessment of the gospel presentation of Pilate is a complicated task, and involves the consideration of many problematic factors. The Christian writers, in seeking to explain the Roman execution of Jesus for sedition, represent Pilate as a witness to the innocence of Jesus, forced by the Jewish leaders and people to crucify him. However, critical investigation of the gospel accounts of the trial of Jesus reveals a more intelligible situation – that Pilate ordered his death because he was convinced by the evidence laid before him that Jesus was politically dangerous.

According to Josephus, in his *Jewish Antiquities*, Pilate was relieved of his command in 36 and sent to Rome by Vitellius, the legate of Syria, because of his harsh suppression of an incipient revolt of the Samaritans. We are not informed of Pilate's eventual fate.

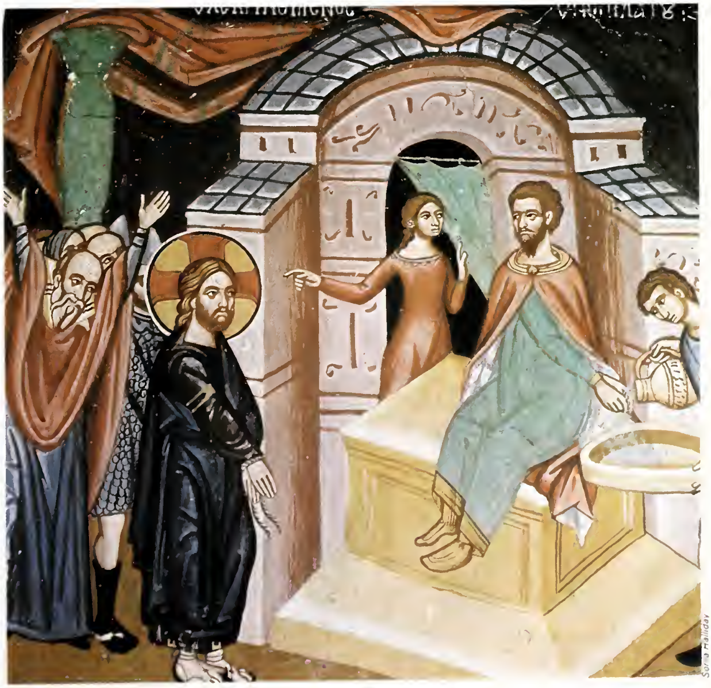
The impetus given by the gospels to presenting Pilate as a witness to the innocence of Jesus was soon exploited by other Christian writers, who obviously drew upon their imagination. The apologist Tertullian (c 160-220), declared that Pilate, 'himself in his secret heart already a Christian', sent such a report about Christ to Tiberius that the latter was convinced of his divinity and sought to persuade the Senate of it.

Persecuted by the Roman government as a subversive sect, it was natural that the Christians should seek to rebut such an accusation by claiming that the Roman governor of Judaea had not only acknowledged the innocence of Jesus, but had recognized him as divine. However, the importance of Pilate to the Christian case was also appreciated by its enemies, and it resulted in a mysterious episode. In 311 the Emperor Maximin, a fierce persecutor of Christians, issued 'Memoirs of Pilate'. That they were harmful to Christianity is certain but no copy has survived. Christians claimed that these 'memoirs' were forgeries and eventually had the offending documents rounded up and destroyed.

The consternation caused by Maximin's publication of the 'Memoirs of Pilate' seems to have led to the production of a Christian version. It takes a narrative form, and contains long tortuous dialogues between Pilate and the Jewish leaders, and Pilate and Jesus. The writing develops the gospel thesis that the Jews were responsible for the Crucifixion, exonerating Pilate. This theme was elaborated in other writings to such a degree that it was eventually claimed that Pilate died as a martyr for Christ.

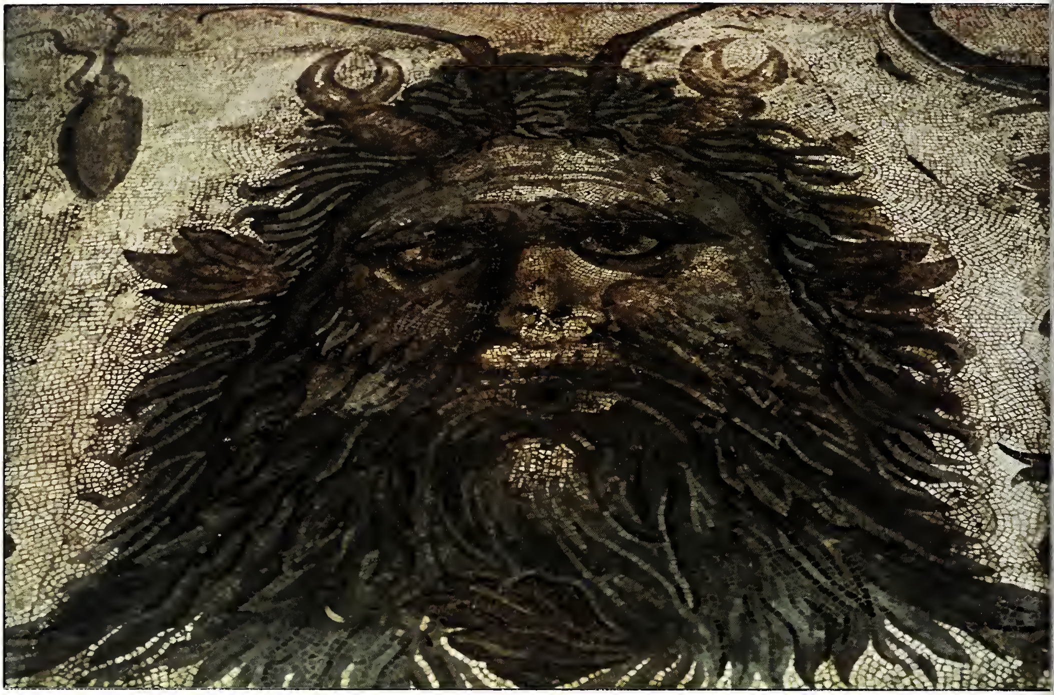
This transformation of Pilate, from the Roman governor who executed Jesus into a Christian saint who died for him, was arrested in the Catholic Church by its triumph under Constantine I. With its legal status now assured, it had no further need of the witness of Pontius Pilate. A change of attitude towards him soon set in. It is marked by the statement of Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea (260-340), that Pilate, overwhelmed by misfortune, committed suicide. A later Latin legend tells how Pilate anticipated execution by killing himself and how Tiberius had his corpse thrown into the Tiber; but its presence there attracted such swarms of demons that it was transported to Vienne, on the Rhone. After burial near Lausanne and consequent demonic disturbance, the unholy thing was finally deposited in a lake by Mount Pilatus, Switzerland, where its awful presence continued to provoke diabolical activity.

FURTHER READING: S. G. F. Brandon, *Religion in Ancient History* (Scribner, 1970); *Jesus and the Zealots* (Scribner, 1968); and *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth* (Stein and Day, 1979).



According to St Matthew's gospel, Pontius Pilate washed his hands before the crowd at Jesus's trial, saying 'I am innocent of this man's blood...'; in fact, Pilate probably ordered his death because he was convinced that Jesus was politically dangerous: 15th-century wall painting, Cyprus

Sonia Halliday



As god of the sea, Poseidon has a golden palace in the depths of the ocean, but he was earlier the god of the earthquake: the head of Poseidon from a mosaic in North Africa

POSEIDON

THE SECOND GREATEST of the Greek gods was Poseidon. No other male deity ranks as the brother of Zeus, except Hades (see PLUTO). In the *Iliad*, he is the god whom Zeus has the greatest difficulty in bending to his will. Threatened, he protests that his status is equivalent to Zeus's; the universe has been shared out equally among the three sons of Cronus, and Poseidon has the sea, Hades the underworld, and Zeus the sky.

For Homer, Poseidon is the god of the sea. He has a golden palace in the depths of the waters, the sea creatures dance at his passing by, and when he leads the Greeks to battle the waves surge up to their encampment. He causes storms at sea and sailors pray to him for a safe voyage. But he is also the god of the earthquake, and this appears to have been his primary role at the time when the formulaic epic language was taking shape, for his standard epithets all refer to it: *enosichthon* or *ennosigaios*, 'earth-shaker', *gaie(w)ochos*, 'earth-carrier', *eriktypos*, 'loud-booming'.

To delve further into his past, we assess his importance in the cults and legends of Greece, and discover a significant fact. The Hellenes entered Greece in two main waves. The first came about 2000 BC, and during the following centuries was much affected by cultural influences from the subject people and the civilization of Minoan Crete. The second wave came about 1200 BC, flooding large areas with a dourer folk known to us as the Dorians. In these areas, Poseidon has his cults, but is noticeably less prominent in myths. In Sparta the dialect form in which his name appears shows that he was taken over from the pre-Dorian population. We infer, firstly, that his worship spread itself in Greece before the Dorian invasion and was diminished by it; secondly, that it was not shared by the invaders. In other words, it was not brought by the Hellenes from an earlier home but was native to Greece. Greece was always a land shaken by earthquakes, and if the pre-Hellenic population feared any god, they must have feared the earth-shaker. His name does not lend itself to explanation from Greek, and is probably indigenous.

In Homer his only peer is Zeus, who certainly came with the Hellenes, and afterwards we see Zeus steadily growing in power and universality, while Poseidon declines. Perhaps Poseidon had once been the greatest god in Greece. It is natural enough that the god who makes the earth heave and toss should be identified as the one who makes the sea heave and toss. It is also possible that the belief that the earth rested on the sea – the starting point of scientific speculation in the 6th century BC – goes back to much earlier times: the god of the sea might then indeed be called the 'earth-carrier'. It is no less natural that he should sometimes be associated with springs and rivers, which are frequently seen to change their courses in earthquakes. And when he appears in genealogies as the first ancestor of a royal line, or in cult as 'Father', 'God of the clan' and so on, he is clearly exceeding the prerogatives of a seismic force. At Athens 'Poseidon!' was a colloquial expostulation, like 'for heaven's sake!' These do look like survivals from a time when he was really great.

But he has passed his prime by the time literature comes into view. If he is primarily the god of the sea in Homer's eyes, he is no longer mighty in the land. He maintains his place in the ceremonial calendar, and one of the great national sports meetings, held every two years at the Isthmus of Corinth, was consecrated to him. But he is honoured like a great man in retirement. He is made to fit in with other arrangements. Other gods develop and take on new aspects in response to changing needs, but Poseidon remains static, more and more confined to the sea. His title Asphalios, 'god of security', originally of geophysical significance, came to be understood as 'saviour of ships'.

By the 6th century BC, earthquakes were being explained from natural causes by the sophisticated. In 373 BC an earthquake and tidal wave destroyed the town of Helice (along the coast from Patras), together with a notable shrine of Poseidon. Such an occurrence was not calculated to increase respect for the ancient gods, any more than when Zeus struck his own temples with lightning.

M.L.WEST

POSSESSION

'MY NAME IS LEGION; for we are many.' This was the reply of the madman who lived among the tombs, when Jesus asked him his name before driving the demons out of him and into a herd of swine (Mark, chapter 5). The number of gods, spirits or devils which have been believed to enter into and seize control of human personalities, all through history and all over the world, has indeed been legion. What is particularly interesting about so many accounts of possession and exorcism is their marked similarity to modern psychiatric case-histories and methods of treatment.

One of the techniques used successfully during the Second World War in treating men suffering from battle neuroses was to induce the patient, under drugs, to recreate in his mind the situation of terror and stress which had caused his breakdown, so that he could relive the situation and better deal with it. (Hypnosis had been used for the same purpose during the First World War.) Late in the war we began to discover that it was not so much this reliving of a particular situation of stress that helped recovery, but the release of intense emotional excitement, and this remained true when the excitement was focused on some comparatively trivial occurrence or even on an incident which was entirely imaginary.

The emotions which seemed to be the essential ones to arouse were either those of fierce anger and aggressiveness or those of intense anxiety and fear. What happened, very briefly, was that the patient's state of excitement would rise to a crescendo, which might be followed by a temporary collapse, after which he felt that the abnormal fears and worries by which, in the age-old terminology, he had been 'possessed' had now left him. Various types of shock treatment, including electrical shock therapy, have been extensively used in the same way (though, of course, it should not be supposed that all patients or all varieties of mental illness respond to treatment of this sort).

Jurgen Schadeberg/Susan Griggs

ILE ỌBA TOJO ẸWA LO BU KUN
OWA ỌBALUWAIYE WA KANDỌ.

Photo Dav

Yoruba worshippers of Sopono, the god who inflicts smallpox, dance themselves into a possessed state (*below*), and (*above*) a Bushman in trance

It was towards the end of the war that I came across a volume of John Wesley's *Journal* and was struck by the resemblance between his accounts of what happened at his revival meetings and the reactions which my colleagues and I were deliberately inducing in patients. Wesley was a preacher of formidable power who impressed on the minds of his hearers the horrors of hell which awaited them if they did not repent. Some of them reacted as the possessed of all times and places have done, groaning and shrieking, shaking and pouring with sweat, writhing on the ground and feeling 'pierced in the heart', and finally collapsing. When they recovered, they often felt soothed and 'changed', converted to a new outlook, and at peace with themselves, as our patients who had been through a similar ordeal felt that old terrors had lost their hold.

Wesley's entry for 23 October 1739 gives a vivid picture of the experience of possession. He went to see two women who were 'tormented'. One of them, aged 19 or 20, was

being forcibly held down on a bed. 'It was a terrible sight. Anguish, horror and despair, above all description, appeared in her pale face. The thousand distortions of her whole body showed how the dogs of hell were gnawing her heart. The shrieks intermixed were scarce to be endured. But her stony eyes could not weep. She screamed out, as soon as words could find their way, "I am damned, damned; lost for ever. Six days ago you might have helped me... I have (now) given myself to him. His I am. Him I must serve. With him I must go to hell. I will be his. I will serve him. I will go with him to hell. I cannot be saved. I will not be saved. I must, I will, I will be damned." She then began praying to the devil... We continued in prayer till past eleven; when God in a moment spoke peace into the soul, first of the first tormented, and then of the other. And they both joined in singing praise to Him who had "stilled the enemy and the avenger".'

Satanic Laughter

Wesley had at first put the curious effects of his preaching down to the action of the Holy Spirit but he soon came to wonder whether the Devil had a hand in them. Very similar behaviour was reported of some of Mesmer's patients in the later 18th century (see MAGNETISM; MESMER). One of the Commissioners who investigated on behalf of the French Royal Society of Medicine reported that: 'Some patients remain calm, and experience nothing; others cough, spit, feel slight pain, a local or general heat, and fall into sweats; others are agitated and tormented by convulsions... characterized by involuntary jerking movements in all the limbs, and in the whole body, by contraction of the throat, by twitchings... by dimness and rolling of the eyes, by piercing cries, hiccoughs, and immoderate laughter. They are preceded or followed by a state of languor or dreaminess, by a species of depression, and even by stupor.'

In many parts of the world drumming and dancing induce possession: during a Ghanaian festival a woman dances frenziedly, until she finally collapses

John Moss

It was noticed that women were more likely to experience this 'crisis' than men, that the hysterical excitement was contagious and spread rapidly from one person in a group to others, that the patients became extremely suggestible and that this suggestibility played a vital role in both the crisis and the cure, and that in many cases the behaviour of women patients closely resembled what happens in female orgasm. All these points are highly relevant to the famous cases of so-called demonic possession in French convents in the 16th and 17th centuries. The possessed were mostly women, the contagion spread from one nun to another, the behaviour of the victims was orgasmic and they were also highly suggestible, pouring out torrents of horrific and detailed filth in response to suggestions by their exorcists that they were witches, that they worshipped the Devil at sabbaths, that they had practised cannibalism, and so on (see AIX-EN-PROVENCE NUNS; AUXONNE NUNS; LOUDUN NUNS; RENATA). The parallel was observed by the Commissioners themselves, who commented in a private report to King Louis XV that Mesmeric treatment might

Madness, abnormal behaviour of various kinds, and the ability to fall into an ecstatic state have been attributed to spirit possession all over the world *Right* In West Pakistan a youth drinks the blood of a goat after becoming 'possessed of fairies', and eventually falls into a trance

Roger Wood Studio

cause epidemics of the behaviour which had occurred in the convents.

Not that women are the only victims of possession, far from it. One of the most famous modern cases is that of a French peasant named Achille. He was 33 when 'he fell into a complete lethargy, and remained motionless for two days. At the end of that period he awoke and burst into a fit of Satanic laughter, which presently changed into frightful shrieks and complaints that he was tortured by demons. This state lasted for many weeks. He would pour forth blasphemies and obscenities... He would describe the evil spirits which tormented him, their diabolic grimaces and the horns which adorned their heads.' He was treated by the celebrated psychologist Pierre Janet, who found that the root cause of the attack was Achille's intense guilt at having been unfaithful to his wife, which in his own mind had condemned him to damnation and to be the sport of devils. He showed all the signs of what in earlier centuries was considered diabolic possession.

Divine Combat

An account of the method of exorcizing 'the impure spirits of both sexes' which infest the bodies of living men, given by Zeno of Verona in the 4th century AD, emphasizes the frightening emotional excitement of the possessed state. 'But as soon as we enter into the field of divine combat and begin to drive them forth with the arrow of the holy name of Jesus, then thou mayest take pity on the other... His face is suddenly deprived of colour, his body rises up of itself, the eyes in madness loll in their sockets and squint horribly, the teeth, covered with a horrible foam, grind between blue-white lips; the limbs twisted in all directions are given over to trembling – he sighs, he weeps...' This is very reminiscent of the sort of symptoms observed in the drug abreactive treatment of cases of battle neurosis from the Normandy beachhead in 1944.

A case reported by a clergyman in Germany in 1714 describes an emotional 'crisis', with subsequent collapse and recovery. He first visited the possessed woman in a workhouse where, he says, 'Satan abruptly hurled this invective at me by her mouth: "Silly fool, what are you doing in this workhouse? You'll get lice here," etc.' He took the woman to church, read to her two of the accounts of demonic possession in the New Testament, and commanded Satan to come out of her. 'Satan tortured the poor creature horribly, howled through her mouth in a frightful manner and threw her to the ground so rigid, so insensible that she became as cold as ice and lay as dead, at which time we could not perceive the slightest breath until at last with God's help she came to herself...'

For thousands of years, all forms of madness, of grossly abnormal behaviour and, sometimes, of physical disease have been explained in terms of spirit possession. The spirit might be an evil one, a morally neutral one, a good spirit or a god. Various Christian groups have felt, as Wesley did at first, that 'enthusiastic' behaviour was a sign of possession by the Holy Ghost. In other societies there has been the belief in 'holy madness' or the belief that a magician or shaman can become possessed by a god or a spirit, can convey the god's words to his worshippers and can heal the sick. Many of these cures work, probably because of the patients' heightened suggestibility.

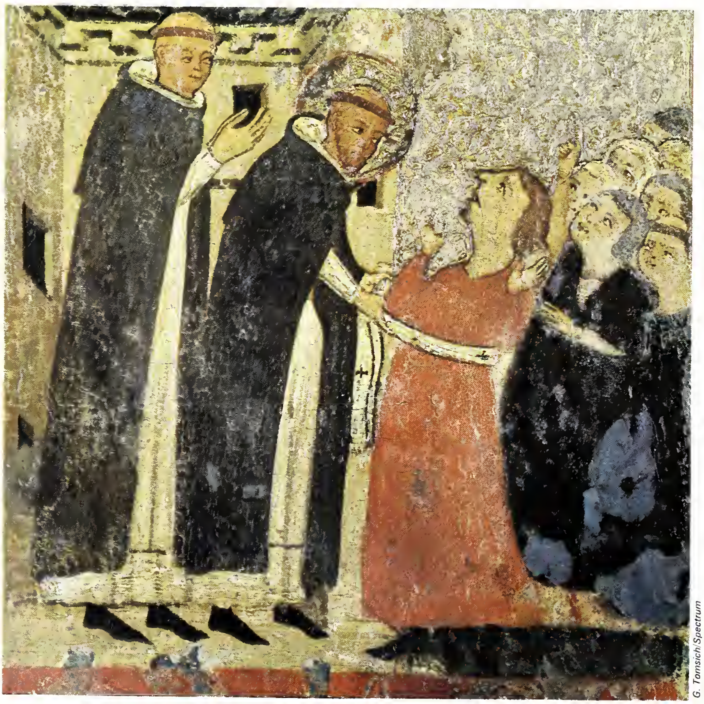
In Ethiopia, for example, people are sometimes believed to be possessed by spirits called *zars*. Patients are treated by a 'doctor' who is himself zar-possessed but who has 'come to terms' with his zar. He, or she, sometimes goes into a state of trance, in which his own zar takes control of him, and then tries to discover the identity of the patient's zar so as to negotiate with it. He speaks in the special language of zars, a jumble, based on Amharic and recalling the phenomenon of 'speaking in tongues'. He persuades the zar, by promising it the gifts which it demands through the mouth of the patient, to turn itself into a kindly and helpful guardian spirit.

In Haiti the main purpose of Voodoo ceremonies is for one or more of the worshippers to become possessed by a *loa*, a god or spirit which 'rides' him as if he was a horse but which is also inside his head. As in many other parts of the world, drumming and dancing help to induce the experience. When the loa enters a man, he behaves in its characteristic manner and speaks with its voice, sometimes in the loa language, which is a jumble of muddled words (see also VOODOO).

Possession by a god or by the ghost of someone who has died is common in India. Two anthropologists who investigated a case at a village not far from Delhi commented that 'spirit possession, like hysteria, has two conditions: a basic condition due to the individual's intra-psychic tension and a precipitating condition due to an event or situation involving unusual stress or emotion.' The young woman who was possessed shivered, complained of feeling cold, then sat up and started to jerk violently. The ghost, which had now entered her, spoke through her mouth and her assembled relatives had a long conversation with it. They were mainly concerned to establish its identity, and the emphasis on discovering the name of the possessing spirit, so as to gain power over it, is a common feature of exorcism procedures all over the world.

Mircea Eliade has described how a Siberian shaman restores the soul of a sick patient, which has escaped from his body. After drumming for a long time, the shaman calls on various spirits to come and stand near him. After more drumming, he goes to the door and breathes deeply, to swallow the spirits he has summoned, who now speak through his mouth. Then he lies on the ground, face down and motionless, for he has left his body and is travelling in the spirit world. Eventually he returns, bringing with him the fugitive soul which he has rescued from the 'kingdom of shadows' and which he restores to the patient's body. (See also PRIESTS; SHAMAN.)

The symptoms of possession and exorcism, as described by Christian writers, strikingly resemble the reactions of some patients to modern psychiatric treatment: 13th-century painting of St Dominic exorcizing a man



G. Tomsich/Spectrum

Streaming in Like Light

Drugs and sex have both been used to induce the experience of possession and to gain personal contact with the divine. Here is John Addington Symonds, the 19th-century art critic, describing his sensations under chloroform: 'I thought I was near death; when suddenly my soul became aware of God, who was manifestly dealing with me, handling me, so to speak in an intensely personal present reality. I felt him streaming in like light upon me... I cannot describe the ecstasy I felt.'

The magician Aleister Crowley (see CROWLEY) experimented liberally with both drugs and sex as gateways to communication with spirits. To take only one example from many, here is his account of the results of an operation of sex-magic with a woman named Mary d'Este Sturges in 1911. 'At about midnight she was in a state of excitement, exhaustion and hysteria... one little removed from an amorously infuriated lioness... suddenly and without warning (this) gave place to a profound calm hardly distinguishable from prophetic trance and she began to describe what she was seeing... (she) had seen in a dream the head of five White Brothers... The person now appeared again to her. He was an old man with a long white beard.'

The evidence increasingly suggests that cases like this have nothing to do with spirits of any kind but have their causes in the human brain, and particularly in greatly increased brain suggestibility in states of emotional excitement and upheaval. If this is true, the implications go far beyond the field of possession, and may throw much light on the phenomena of conversion and faith, the mystical experience of being 'one' with God, ecstatic and 'enthusiastic' behaviour, 'speaking in tongues', mediumistic communications with the dead, trance and semi-trance states, 'astral travel', spiritual healing and other supposedly supernatural manifestations.

(See also CONVERSION; DRUGS; ECSTASY; ENTHUSIASM; EXORCISM; HYSTERICAL POSSESSION; MADNESS; MULTIPLE PERSONALITY; NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE; TRANCE.)

WILLIAM SARGANT

FURTHER READING: W. Sargant, *Battle for the Mind* (Greenwood, 1975) and *The Unquiet Mind* (Little, Brown, 1967); Adam Crabtree, *Multiple Man: Explorations in Possession and Multiple Personality* (Praeger, 1985); Bruce Kapferer, *A Celebration of Demons* (Indiana Univ. Press, 1983). See also R. Cavendish, *Visions of Heaven and Hell* (Orbis, 1977); J. Middleton ed, *Magic, Witchcraft and Curing* (Univ. of Texas Press, 1976).

Prayer

Communication addressed to a god or supernatural power, asking for help or guidance or the granting of a wish, or expressing devotion, giving thanks or confessing faults and asking forgiveness, or sometimes conveying orders and threats; often expressed in a set formula and accompanied by prescribed postures and gestures, for example, kneeling and bowing the head; the prayer formula is sometimes magically expected to be effective by itself.
See INCANTATION; ROSARY.

Albertina, Vienna

Precognition

Knowledge of what is going to happen in the future; ways of gaining such knowledge, really or allegedly, have been legion and include astrology, palmistry and many other methods of fortune telling, prophecies, oracles and omens, summoning up spirits or ghosts, trance states, dreams, premonitions and 'intuitions'; much work has been done on precognition as a type of psi ability.
See DIVINATION; EXTRA-SENSORY PERCEPTION; and related articles.

'At the beginning of the world God knew all men that would be born, and decreed in advance which ones would be saved': since the early days of Christianity theologians have attempted to reconcile doctrines of predestination with the belief in man's free will

PREDESTINATION

VARIOUS DOCTRINES have been elaborated within the Christian Church which seek to explain the manner in which God, it is supposed, calls some individuals to eternal life and condemns others to everlasting punishment. Theories of predestination encounter acute difficulties in reconciling man's freedom of will with the complete knowledge of the future which theologians ascribe to God, and which imperils our notion of time. Few laymen now have much interest in the minutiae of theology but the problem of free will is still a tantalizing one.

Problems of destiny, determinism and free will came under discussion in the ancient Greek and Roman world long before the Christian era (see FATE). The ideas of both determinism and providence derive from the orderliness of natural phenomena, such as the succession of the seasons, which suggest that physical and biological events progress according to invariable laws. Implicit in the notion of determinism is the idea of causality which is firmly rooted in the human mind as a result of very elementary experiences. A child pushes an object and it moves. The operator of any machine, however humble, is completely familiar with the concept of causality. But it can only be recognized if the nature of things does not change capriciously. The laws of Nature must be invariable. It was by recognition of natural law that the philosophers were led to a monotheistic form of theism. The uniformity and lawfulness of Nature must, they thought, result from a single Mind. This intelligence was often identified with Zeus, traditionally the chief of the gods, but just as often considered as a mere abstract kind of Being.

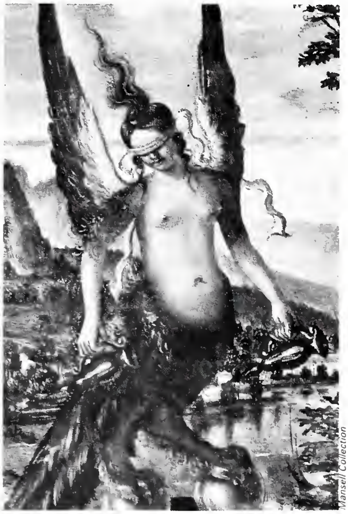
Views differed as to the relations between the deity and the world. Aristotle (384–322 BC) thought of the universe after its creation as running more or less under its own steam according to natural causality. A minority of thinkers such as Epicurus (341–270 BC) postulated an entirely self-sufficient uncreated universe lasting for all eternity and running on purely mechanical lines, a remarkable anticipation of modern scientific materialism. Such a scheme (except that it included an element of randomness or chance) represented a determinism of a mechanical kind without any additional determinism imposed by an overriding providence.

The teaching of the Stoics started with Zeno (336–264 BC). Their doctrines developed into a kind of materialistic pantheism. (Pantheistic theologies are those which regard the deity as permeating the world to a degree that makes it hard to distinguish between God and the world.) According to the Stoics the soul consists of a fine material. So also does the Soul of the World (God) who, or which, suffuses all other matter. Everything therefore happens in a purely mechanical way but also in accordance with the will of the World Soul which is the ultimate cause of all motion and change. The Stoics taught acceptance of the Will's decrees, and this is why the adjective stoical is used nowadays to describe fortitude and resignation. In Stoicism the ideas of mechanical determinism and overriding providence were curiously fused together. According to the Stoics everything was predetermined by the immanent or indwelling World Soul, and they gave credence to the arts of augury, divination and astrology.

In fact the ancient thinkers, while recognizing a considerable degree of determinism (either mechanical or providential) in the world, were uncertain as to whether all physical happenings are strictly determined and they puzzled over the meaning of free will. Epicurus claimed that atoms have a random motion which is completely uncaused. Similarly, operations of the will in man are uncaused, so that human choice is totally free. Carneades (c 214–c 129 BC), one of the Sceptics (philosophers who tended to probe into all assumptions and question all statements), argued that the wayward course of both the atom and the human soul was not uncaused, but resulted from their own inner natures. He admitted that the inner cause of action might well be unknowable, so that human actions were unpredictable. Carneades was perhaps the first thinker to make a clear distinction between determinism and predictability.

In Judaic tradition God created the angels, giving them freedom to obey or disobey him. Satan, Prince of the Angels, disobeyed, together with a considerable following of other ranks. Adam, though created in a state of sinless virtue, yielded to Satan's persuasion and also disobeyed, and having fallen into sin forfeited his immortality. According to St Paul and all the early Christians the sinfulness of Adam was 'inherited' by all his descendants (see EVIL; FIRST MAN; MAN).

According to this concept, all men owed a debt or penalty to God and were therefore



Mansell Collection

The tension between destiny and free will is an old philosophical problem *Above* Fortune wears a blindfold, indicating the random way she grants favours: painting by Giovanni Bellini *Right* The position of the planets was said to influence a man's life: illustration from a 16th century book on midwifery shows astrologers at work during a confinement

subject either to eternal death (a mere forfeiting of immortality) or, in the more traditional view, to everlasting punishment. However Christ's sacrifice of himself upon the cross was, so Paul believed, a complete and adequate discharge of the debt.

Some of the Pauline epistles can be read as if implying that it was God's will that everyone should be saved: '. . . God our Saviour, who desires all men to be saved . . .' (1 Timothy 2.3). However other passages imply that, as was almost universally believed in the Church, the salvation of individuals was conditional on factors additional to the Incarnation and Crucifixion. For example, '. . . for those who are factious and do not obey the truth . . . there will be wrath and fury' (Romans 2.8). In fact Paul tells his readers they will be saved if they have in their hearts the faith that God raised Jesus from the dead.

Christians have always averred that the individual's faith in Christ is essential for salvation. Naturally there has been controversy as to what is meant by 'faith'. Clearly it ought to go deeper than superficial intellectual assent. According to Paul, in order to have saving faith the grace of God, that is, the power to have real faith which is bestowed on the believer as God's free gift, is necessary. The word 'grace' derives from Latin *gratia*, a gift. All the work of salvation is therefore God's and not man's. God paid the penalty of sacrifice, and also bestows the grace necessary for the faith that saves. In the epistles Paul was not writing a theological treatise and so does not set out a fully elaborated doctrine of predestination. But there are several texts which can be, and were, interpreted as meaning that God chooses those whom he will save. For instance, Paul says that 'For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son . . . and those whom he predestined he also called . . .' (Romans 8.29–30). Clearly, whether or not Paul intended it, a fully predestinarian doctrine can be extracted from this: at the beginning of the world God knew all men that would be born, and decreed in advance who would be saved.

The doctrine of predestination remained in the somewhat nebulous Pauline form until the Pelagian controversy of the 5th century. Pelagius (360–420), whose name means 'man of the sea', came from Britain. Like many provincial visitors to Rome before and since, he was scandalized by the decadent life of the city. The licentious Romans blandly pleaded human frailty as an extenuating circumstance. Pelagius was therefore prompted to stress the positive qualities in human nature, and maintained that, if need be, a man's salvation could be achieved by his own efforts unassisted by grace. He did not, of course, deny that if grace were given it would aid the process of salvation. Pelagianism, as the resulting doctrines were called, affirmed the freedom of the will, maintaining that it is at any time free to choose good or evil. This is also true at the moment of birth. Having no innate bias to evil, we lack original sin. According to Pelagianism, no individual was predestined to be saved or lost.

St Augustine (354–430) of Hippo, near Carthage in North Africa, one of the greatest of the Fathers of the Church, was provoked by Pelagianism into formulating a theory of predestination that was to have lasting influence. He maintained that man was free to do good or ill, to seek for God or reject him. Therefore men might differ in their natural merit. But a man was not saved by his natural merit, which was ineffective for salvation unless assisted by grace dispensed by the Holy Spirit. Merit assisted, or instilled, by grace was supernatural merit and only supernatural merits were able to save. The giving or withholding of grace, resulting in salvation or damnation, was God's free choice. Lest it seem that God might be unfair to the damned, Augustine was concerned to stress the totally undeserving condition of fallen man. Because of original sin we deserved eternal punishment; but God in his mercy raised some to blessedness by grace gratuitously given. The graceless therefore should not complain of injustice.

The Ineffable Vision

So far so good; God chooses those whom he will make his own. But why is it *predestination*? According to Augustine, because of God's perfect foreknowledge of all events. Christians traditionally set no limits to God's powers. His omniscience means that he has a complete knowledge of the future. God's foresight moreover differs from man's. He does not predict events as a super-computer might if fed with all possible information about the present and the past. God, according to Augustine and later theologians, knows everything *directly*, whether past, present or future, because his existence is outside of time. His knowledge consists of 'one eternal, immutable and ineffable vision'. According to Augustine, God foresees even the free acts of men and knows in advance how their free choices will turn out. He also foresees at the Creation all that he will himself bring to pass, including the dispensation of grace. Augustine was therefore able to say, 'Predestination is nothing else than the foreknowledge and fore-ordaining of those gratuitous gifts by which God makes certain the salvation of those who are saved.'

The status of free will remains somewhat ambiguous in St Augustine's system. The Roman statesman and philosopher Boethius (480–525) wrote that if from eternity God foreknows the wills of men, there can be no free will. Augustine clearly implied that God pre-destines the blessed to salvation, but left in obscurity the question whether God can be said to fore-ordain the graceless sinner to perdition. The question was particularly acute in respect of infants dying unbaptized. Baptism was generally considered adequate to confer saving grace and blessedness on children who died shortly after receiving the sacrament: but the unbaptized were in an unmitigated state of original sin. According to one solution, their fate was settled by God through his foreknowledge of whether, if they had lived, they would have received (from him) supernatural merit through grace. According to a milder solution unbaptized infants go to limbo, a region adjacent to hell and inhabited by virtuous pagans who had died before Christ's coming.

It was easy to move from Augustine's teaching to the doctrine of Predestinarianism. In the 5th century Lucidus, a Gallic priest, taught that Christ did not die for the non-elect who had been created expressly to go to hell. Similarly, in the 9th century in France, the monk Gottschalk of Orbais was condemned for saying the same, and maintaining that original sin had cancelled free will. The resulting controversy had to be settled by a synod of bishops in 860, which decided that God desires the salvation of all men. Despite original sin, the will is free and is aided by grace. The damnation of the lost results from their abuse of free will. St Bonaventure (1221–74) supported this formulation and held that while God offers saving grace to all, men are wholly free to reject it.

St Thomas Aquinas (1226–74) revived a formula originally developed by the Greek theologian St John of Damascus (676–754). A man is free to accept or reject the gratuitous gift of grace which God offers to all. God *antecedently* wills to save him, but in the very instant of the Creation foresees how he will respond and, in the light of this prevision, God *consequently* wills his salvation or reprobation. Of course the antecedent and consequent wills of God are not separated in time, and this solution will seem to many to be mere sophistry and logic-chopping. The Roman Catholic Church has never spoken authoritatively on the doctrine of predestination as a whole. At present Catholic theologians tend to favour a theory similar to that of St Thomas Aquinas, involving God's antecedent and consequent will.

Predestinarianism really came into its own among the Protestant reformers. Martin Luther, himself an Augustinian friar, was concerned to stress faith and grace as being superior to good works, and maintained that God absolutely predestines his elect to glory without regard to their human merits. Free will went out when original sin came in, and all human acts are subject to the overriding providence of God. It was Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531), the Swiss reformer, who went to the extent of declaring that God fore-ordained some men to perdition in order that his justice be made manifest, though it is John Calvin (1509–64) who is usually associated with this doctrine.

Few modern Christian sects put much stress on predestination or related doctrines. Salvation is primarily the gift of God through grace. The ways to making oneself receptive of grace are the sacraments, prayer, moral effort and striving to love God and one's neighbour. None can be sure of salvation but all may hope.

A. R. G. OWEN

FURTHER READING: L. Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Eetdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 1932); John Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God* (James Clarke, 1961 reprint); M. J. Farrelly, *Predestination, Grace and Free Will* (Burns & Oates, 1963).

PREMONITIONS

DURING THE Second World War, Winston Churchill, as Britain's leader, often went out by car at night during air raids to see things for himself. He usually sat in the back seat, behind the driver. On one particular occasion, however, he changed his mind and went round to the other side of the car. Later that night a bomb fell and the blast tilted the car up on two wheels, but then it righted itself. If it had not, both Churchill and his driver might well have been killed. When Mrs Churchill heard about the incident, she asked her husband why he had changed his usual seat in the car. He replied that he didn't know, but, when she persisted, he said that 'something inside' him had told him not to sit in his customary place.

Churchill's premonition may have changed the course of history, it seems, but most presentiments or forebodings are not on so dramatic a level. A premonition is a mysterious awareness of a future event, often of an unwelcome nature – death, danger, ill luck or a mishap of some kind – not arrived at by rational calculation, but coming into the mind unbidden in some way as yet unexplained. It can range from a clear prevision of a specific future occurrence – 'X is going to be killed in a road accident tomorrow' – to the vaguer 'X is going to die soon', on to a still vaguer but powerful foreboding of some impending, but unspecified, evil.

Even when they hit the main target, premonitions frequently seem to get details wrong. J.W.Dunne, author of the celebrated book *An Experiment With Time*, was in South Africa in 1902 when he had a vivid nightmare about an island which was threatened by a volcano. In the dream he was desperately trying to get the authorities to take action to save the island's 4000 inhabitants. He knew that the figure was 4000 and the number preyed on his mind in the dream. Several days later Dunne read the newspaper accounts of the eruption of a volcano on the island of Martinique which had killed 40,000 people. However, Dunne mistook the number of dead, reading it as 4000, and he only discovered long afterwards that the reported figure had really been ten times as many. As a result, he came to the conclusion that his precognition had been of himself misreading the newspaper stories.

Warnings of Doom

Premonitions may occur in dreams or in the waking state. They are among the most commonly reported experiences of an apparently psychic nature, and perhaps there are not many people who have not had a premonition at some time or other. There are many occasions when a premonition turns out to be wrong and the expected event does not happen, but these do not make the same impression on the mind as the ones which are borne out.

Writing in the Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research, W.E.Cox reported an analysis of the number of passengers riding in a train involved in an accident, compared with the normal number. He found a significant reduction: for example, the Chicago & East Illinois Georgian carried only nine passengers on the day it was involved in an accident, but a typical 62 five days before. Cox concluded that potential passengers had had an unconscious premonition sufficient to make them change their plans.

Not all premonitions are of misfortune, by any means. It is quite a common everyday experience, for instance, to hear the telephone ring and 'know' who is going to be on the other end before you pick it up.

Disaster Ahead

It is the premonitions connected with disaster, however, which hit the headlines. Like the assassination of Spencer Perceval, British prime minister, in 1812, which a man named John Williams saw in a dream more than a week before it happened. Or the dream in which Countess Tuchkov saw her father giving her the news of her husband's death at the battle of Borodino, also in 1812. The dream came three months in advance of the event – Borodino being an unknown place to both her husband and herself at the time. And a few nights before he was assassinated in 1865, President Abraham Lincoln is said to have dreamed that he saw his dead body lying in state in the East Room of the White House.

After the sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912, there were many stories of premonitions and prophecies of the liner's fate. The novelist Graham Greene, then a small boy, dreamed of a great shipwreck the night before the tragedy. A businessman named J. Cannon Middleton cancelled his passage on the ship, and thereby probably saved his life, after dreaming two nights in succession of her floating keel upwards on the sea with the passengers and crew swimming around her. On the other hand, the celebrated professional palmist and fortune-teller Cheiro had told a well-known journalist of the day, W.T.Stead, that April 1912 was going to be a time of danger for him: 'So don't travel by water then if you can help it.' Stead took no notice and went down with the liner.

There were numerous reports of premonitions after the disaster at Aberfan in Wales in 1966, when a coal tip slid down a mountainside and crushed the village school, killing 128 children and 16 others. Dr J.C. Barker, a psychiatrist, collected 76 accounts of premonitions allegedly foreseeing the disaster. Of these, 36 had occurred in dreams and 24 premonitions had been witnessed by another person before the event. Some of the stories were impressive. For example, a woman in Plymouth 'saw' a mountain of coal hurtling down and burying a school in a valley and described what she had seen at a meeting on the day before the disaster occurred. This was confirmed by six witnesses who had been at the meeting.

A particularly sad example was the case of a 10-year-old Aberfan schoolgirl, who told her mother the day before the tragedy that she had dreamed of going to school and the school not being there because 'something black had come down over it.' The little girl went happily off to school as usual next day and was killed in the disaster.

Dr Barker helped to set up a short-lived British Premonitions Bureau in the following year, 1967, backed by a London newspaper. Nearly 500 examples were sent in during its first year, though most of them came from only a small number of people. In May a Mr Hencher told the Bureau of his premonition of a plane crash with sad deaths of children and something to do with the aircraft's tail-fin. In the following month a plane duly crashed at Stockport with substantial loss of life, including a number of child fatalities. The tail-fin, which was the only part of the plane undamaged, was pictured in many of the newspaper stories. In 1968 a bureau of the same kind was set up in New York, with similar results. In 1969 a man sent in a premonition of the crash of a light plane, with a number something like N129N or N429N. A few months later the world heavyweight boxing champion Rocky Marciano was killed in the crash of a light aircraft numbered N3149X.

Dr Louisa Rhine, the distinguished American researcher, commented that 'if imperfect ESP impressions, especially those suggesting disasters ahead, could be clarified, intelligent preventative action could follow to the untold advantage of mankind.' Among many interesting cases she investigated was a remarkable example of a long-range premonition in which a mother 'saw' her son dead in his bath. This haunted her and two years later, one evening, when she heard him singing in the bath and then he fell silent, she felt thoroughly uneasy and went in, to find him exactly as she had seen him in the premonition. Fumes from the gas heater had knocked him out and if she had not found him in time, he would have died.

A Pig in the Palace

A case worthy of one of the stories of P.G. Wodehouse was reported to the Society for Psychical Research in 1895. It involved the wife of the Bishop of Hereford, who dreamed that after reading family prayers in the hall of the bishop's palace she opened the dining room door and saw an enormous pig standing between the table and the sideboard. The dream amused her and in the morning she told it to her children and their governess before reading prayers in the hall. She then went into the dining room and there, to her astonishment, was the pig as large as life. It had somehow got out of its sty and wandered into the house.

Like other examples of precognition, or inexplicable foreknowledge of the future, premonitions are vexingly difficult to pin down. Most of them are revealed only after the event has occurred, which makes them useless as evidence, and of those which are independently recorded before the event all too many are unsatisfactorily general and vague. Those specific enough to be impressive, on the other hand, at once attract intense suspicion and hostile criticism, because they seem to threaten our commonsense ideas of time and our cherished belief in human free will.

(See also DREAMS; EXTRA-SENSORY PERCEPTION.) RICHARD CAVENDISH

The search for the Devil's mark involved piercing the suspect's body with long needles; if any spot was insensitive to pain, or if it did not bleed, this was proof that he or she was a witch

PRICKING

THE THEORY that a witch could be identified by a special mark, a bodily blemish representing the seal which Satan had set upon his followers, led to the practice of pricking the suspect's body in order to find this proof of her pact with the Devil. The 'Satanic compact' was held to be one of the worst forms of heresy, since it committed the witch to a denial of God and to the frustration of his angels and servants, and the search for the Devil's mark became standard witch-hunting procedure.

The mark was supposed to be made by Satan's teeth, tongue or claw, and in some cases it was actually called the 'Devil's claw'. It might be in the shape of a spider, a dormouse, or 'the likeness of a hare', while according to some early medieval authorities it could be compared with the imprint of a cloven hoof.

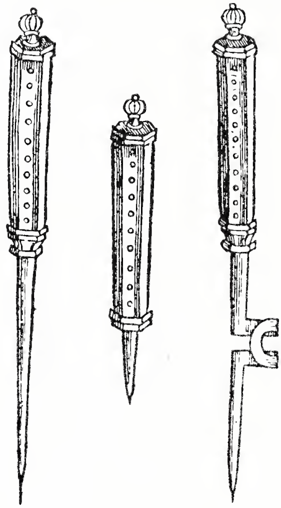
Opinions varied as to where it was most likely to be found. The great majority of witch-hunters looked for the mark near the pubic area of a female suspect, or the anus of a male. Michael Dalton, in his *Country Justice*, a guide to witch-hunting published in 1618, makes it clear that the 'marks be often in their secretest parts and therefore require diligent and careful search'.

The hunt for the Devil's marks was conducted by skilled witch-hunters who had acquired, as the result of long and careful study, an ability to distinguish between ordinary bodily blemishes like moles, warts, old scars and piles, and genuine Devil's marks, which had the peculiar characteristic of being insensitive to pain and incapable of bleeding. It is difficult to determine how this theory could have arisen in the first place, but such an assumption might have been based upon cases of stigmatization, which sometimes occur among hysterics. Bleeding can also be halted on occasion by shock or suggestion.

A suspect's naked body had to be completely shaved to ensure that no protective charm lay concealed among the hairs. With a woman this work was occasionally delegated to a committee of honest matrons, but in the vast majority of cases a highly skilled searcher, usually a man, was responsible for the whole operation because of the possibility that a demon might be lurking in the pubic regions. The entire body was then exhaustively inspected for possible Devil's marks, every wart, pile or mole being thoroughly prodded with a long bodkin which pierced the flesh right down to the bone. The effusion of blood and the screams of the prisoner generally bore testimony to a clean record so far as witchcraft was concerned, but the witch-hunter usually prodded on until some old scar that was insensitive to pain provided the evidence he needed.

There were occasions, of course, when even a comprehensive searching and pricking failed to produce proof of witchcraft, and the theory that the Devil's marks could be invisible began to find favour among witch-hunters. It seemed reasonable to suppose that the Devil would protect his slaves by imprinting upon their bodies a mark that could not be seen, and it therefore became necessary for the witch-hunter to prod every inch of the victim's body, even if it was completely free from blemishes. Even then the Devil's mark might still elude the searching bodkin, and the suspect would be handed over to the torturers.

In Switzerland in the 17th century, Michelle Chaudron strenuously protested her innocence although she was searched for Devil's marks until her whole body gushed blood from the wounds she received; but when she was tortured she readily confessed her guilt. This kind of treatment was justified by a declaration made by the Jesuit Martin Del Rio, that a Devil's mark was not invariably insensitive to pain; it was recognized that even a true witch might occasionally experience agonies when pricked.



In order to obtain 'proof' that a suspect had sealed a pact with Satan, false instruments with retractable blades that disappeared when they were pressed against the body of a suspected witch were sometimes used in the search for the Devil's mark; because the victim showed no sign of pain, he or she could then be presumed guilty: two false bodkins (*left*) and a genuine instrument

Paid By Results

In countries where torture was not commonly practised, or was forbidden by law as in England and Wales, the witch-finder sometimes had to cheat in order to ensure a conviction. A false bodkin, consisting of a hollow shaft with a retractable needle, would be pressed against the body of the prisoner who, since he or she betrayed no symptom of pain, could then be presumed to be guilty.

Throughout the 17th century, the witch-hunters continued their search for the Devil's marks. In the case of Father Louis Gaufridi, of the notorious Aix-en-Provence affair, no less than three such marks were discovered upon his body (see AIX-EN-PROVENCE NUNS). Scotland at one time had a number of witch-prickers who were paid by results, one of whom was hired by the magistrates of Newcastle-on-Tyne at a fee of 20 shillings for every witch he brought to book, plus his travelling expenses. As a result of his activities 15 victims, all but one of them women, were sent to the gallows.

During a witch-hunt in 1649, one of the magistrates, a Lieutenant Colonel Hobson, challenged the authenticity of the tests. A woman, her clothes pulled over her head, was being examined by a witch-finder. He 'ran a pin into her thigh, and then suddenly let her coats fall, and then demanded whether she had nothing of his in her body, but did not bleed.' Because she had felt nothing, the woman would have been sent for trial had not the magistrate ordered the witch-finder to run his pin into the same place again. This time the wound gushed out blood, and the 'pricker' had no alternative but to release her.

'Like a Little Spot'

Closely allied in the popular mind with the Devil's mark were the 'biggs' or teats with which witches were supposed to feed their familiars with blood (see FAMILIARS). These naturally became objects of great interest to the witch-prickers. In a typical case which came to light during the time of Matthew Hopkins, Margaret Bayts, a housewife of Framlingham, Suffolk, was found guilty of feeding a familiar by means of two teats concealed in her 'secret parts'. Another English victim was Elizabeth Sawyer, a one-eyed and blasphemous witch of Edmonton. When searched by 'three grave matrons', she was discovered to have a 'thing like a teat', the size of her little finger, in the region of her buttocks.

It is obvious from the writings of John Bell, an 18th-century Scottish clergyman, that there was a common confusion between the two blemishes, as he describes witches' marks as being 'sometimes like a little spot, or a little teat, or red spots like flea-biting, sometimes also the flesh is sunk into a hollow'. Many people have supernumerary nipples, which are frequently hereditary – as the powers of a witch were also frequently believed to be.

The examination of women for witches' marks seems to have continued into the 18th century, although the old belief in the Devil's marks disappeared. Jane Wenham, the last person to be brought to trial for witchcraft in England, was thoroughly searched for marks without success in 1712, and it was finally found necessary to indict her for 'conversing familiarly with the Devil in the shape of a cat'. She was found guilty of this offence, but later pardoned. During her interrogation Jane Wenham was subjected to the ordeal of witch-pricking, a pin being plunged into her arm six or seven times to start with, and then, when no blood came, 'a great many times more'.

PRIESTS

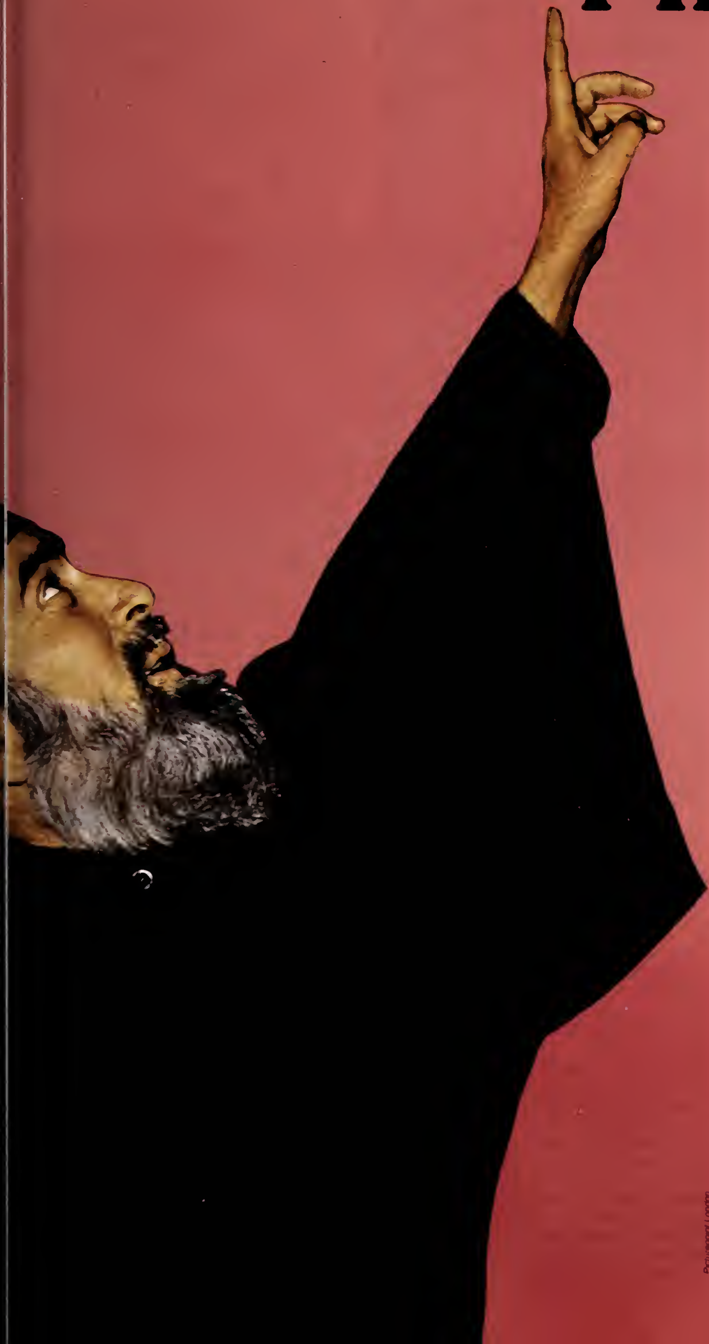
Priests, medicine-men and shamans are 'specialists in the supernatural', who provide a channel of communication between human beings and the divine

AT MOST LEVELS of civilization priests act as the socially-recognized mediators between men and supernatural beings. They are the experts in the performance of rituals, and in pre-literate societies it is they who preserve, by oral tradition, the myths and the body of religious concepts and ideas which constitute a people's intellectual heritage. The functions, selection, training and social position of priests differ widely even within simpler societies, and the designation 'priest' has been applied to a large variety of religious practitioners, who may have little in common except for their alleged ability to establish contact with gods and spirits, or to manipulate supernatural forces.

In some societies there is a distinction between priests, who are the official religious leaders and representatives of the community, and magicians, shamans and prophets, whose power derives from individual supernatural experiences or what is presumed to be direct inspiration by deities or spirits.

At the lowest level of economic development there is little scope for the emergence of ritual experts or any other form of occupational specialization. Most societies of nomadic food gatherers and hunters lack religious specialists comparable to the priests of more advanced peoples. All adults are considered capable of invoking gods or spirits and of soliciting their favour by way of prayers and offerings. Cult acts involving all the members of a group may be conducted by old men who are experienced in the performance of ritual, but no training or hereditary qualification is required for such activity, nor do those engaging in the organization of religious rites enjoy any special privileges.

Where larger and more stable social groups have developed, increased economic efficiency enables man to divert some energies to the elaboration of religious practices. In most societies of some complexity the task of establishing contact with transcendental powers tends to be vested in individuals who act as the representatives of their clan or village. Such individuals need not possess outstanding intellectual gifts, but the ability and the right to perform priestly



According to Christian doctrine, Christ gave priestly authority to the apostles, who passed their authority to the bishops who came after them; they in turn consecrated other bishops, and it is this authority that is transmitted to priests during the ceremony of ordination: Orthodox priest in Cyprus

Picturepoint London

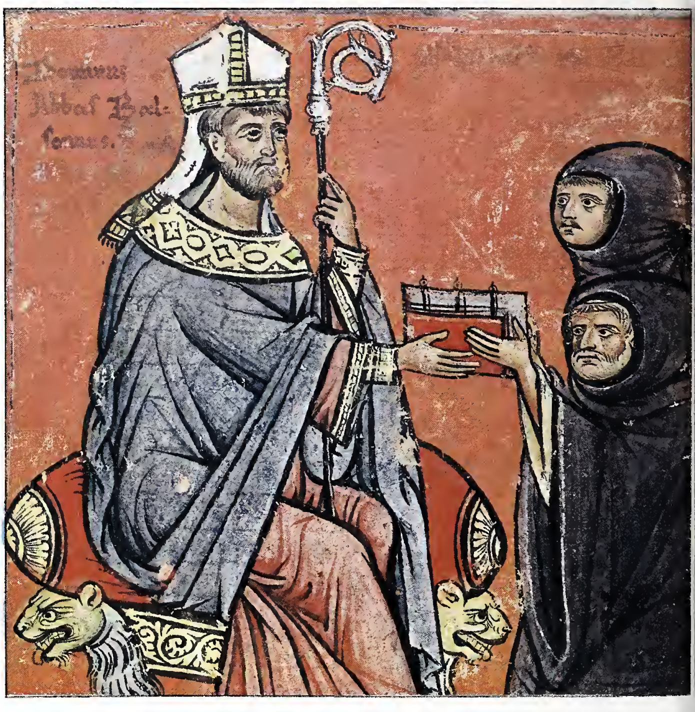
Members of different priesthoods may have little in common except for their alleged ability to establish contact with gods and spirits

functions may be hereditary in certain families, lineages or clans. Another claim to priesthood is derived from psychological states interpreted as possession or selection by a divinity or spirit, who is supposed to invest the priest with powers and knowledge not accessible to other men. Priests who base their position on hereditary rights and priests called to their vocation by the gods may co-exist in the same society.

The Hill Reddis, an aboriginal tribe of southern India, for instance, depend on two classes of intermediaries in their relations with the supernatural world: the hereditary priest of the local group or village, and the magician who derives his powers from an intimate connection with a specific god or spirit. The hereditary priest is normally a descendant of the village-founder, and membership of the lineage of the man who first settled in the locality is sufficient qualification for his office. He is regarded as the head of the village, and as the appropriate mediator between man and the deities and spirits who dwell in the area.

As representative of the village he performs those rites and ceremonies that are believed to secure the prosperity of the community as a whole. And since this prosperity is intimately linked with the thriving of the crops, it is above all the agricultural rites that call for the intercession of the priest. He must inaugurate the sowing of the grain, propitiate the earth deity with sacrifices, and perform the rites at the great seasonal feasts. No special intuition or skill is required for these tasks.

Less simple are those that fall to the magician. While the hereditary spiritual head of the community follows the broad and well-trodden path of long-established ritual, the magician must battle through the wilderness of the supernatural world to discover the cause of disease and threatening disaster, and must devise the means of placating the wrath of malignant spirits. The priest acts, so to speak, while all is well; his offerings are tendered to gods while their mood is benevolent, and his prayers are designed to solicit their favour for the welfare of the community, and their protection against dangers not yet arisen. It is only when misfortune is rife that the magician is called in to restore the disturbed relations with supernatural powers: to draw the sick from the jaws of death or to counteract the black magic of an enemy. This power, which he could not wield unless he possessed a thorough knowledge of magical practices, justifies his being called a 'magician'.



Priests have sometimes claimed to be directly inspired by Christ: 13th-century miniature of an abbot receiving a manuscript from a monk who is shown with two faces, indicating that his work was divinely inspired

Every Reddi village must have a priest, but there may or may not be a magician in the community. Being a magician is an art, acquired by learning or bestowed by supernatural beings on an eager apprentice. It is an art and power within reach only of those men and women who are predisposed to it by particular mental qualities. Naturally these may occur in a priest as well as in any other man, and his frequent performance of ritual acts is bound to favour their development. Nothing debars a priest from learning the practices of a magician, and the combination of both functions is fairly common.

No Reddi is born a magician and aptitude for the work does not manifest itself in childhood. A magician frequently owes his knowledge to the instruction of his father or an older kinsman, but not every son of a famous magician has the talent or the desire to assimilate his parent's teaching. The co-operation of a deity is indispensable to the process of becoming a magician, and it is not only men who seek the gods; on occasion the gods themselves take the initiative. Reddi magicians agree that they

G. Cubitt

Picturepoint, London

Picturepoint, London

Although the basic function of the priest, to communicate between man and the divine, is the same at most levels of civilization, their selection and training differ widely in different societies: in the Christian Church, for instance, the priest's authority is bestowed on him at his ordination, while in more primitive cultures a shaman will be selected because of his ability to fall into a trance or ecstatic state, which is thought to invest him with knowledge and powers inaccessible to ordinary men. The Brahmins of India inherited their ability to perform priestly functions, and have been worshipped as though they were gods themselves *Left to right* A Coptic priest in Ethiopia: a lama in Nepal: a clergyman of the Church of England

receive their inspiration and knowledge from the gods, either while in a state of trance or through the medium of dreams. When a magician is called on to treat a sick person, it is usually his guardian deity who tells him what medicines to apply and what animals to sacrifice.

Married to a Spirit

While the roles of priest and magician are clearly distinguished in some of the simpler societies, they overlap in others, and a distinction between the functions of priests and magicians is hardly perceptible. Both deal with the control of supernatural forces and priests are generally expected to influence the gods through prayer and ritual performances, while magicians exert their power through spells and the manipulation of certain material objects possessed of mysterious efficacy. But as the principal duty of priests is to mediate between mankind and the higher powers, the faculty of communicating with gods and spirits is a primary qualification for the priesthood in many societies. This ability may be proved in different ways. When a person falls into a state of trance or ecstasy, people think that he or she is under the influence of a supernatural power, and therefore suitable for the role of mediator between men and gods. Or the supposed connection between priests and the spirit world may be that they have one or more tutelary deities of their own who assist them when required.

A striking example of this type of link between priests and supernatural beings occurs among the Saora tribe of Orissa in India. Among these primitive hill-farmers, placating the vast otherworld of invisible and often hostile beings occupies the energy of a small band of dedicated men and women. Armed with a few fragile implements, and devoting themselves to supplication of spirits and the sacrifice of animals, these people strive to protect mankind.

There are two types of religious practitioner among the Saoras, the village priest and the shaman or magician. The priest's special function is to maintain the cult of the local shrines and to guard the village lands from the interference of hostile spirits and sorcerers. When a new priest is to be appointed a shaman is called and, falling into a trance, he asks the gods and ancestors whether the proposed candidate is acceptable to them. If they agree that he is, the shaman summons the ghost of the last priest to hold office in the village. If he too approves, the shaman – possessed by, and representing, the dead man – puts his hands on the head of the new priest and tells him to do his work well.

For practical purposes, however, the shaman, who may be male or female, is the most important religious figure in a Saora village. He has the power not only to diagnose the source of trouble or disease but to cure it. He is doctor as well as priest, psychologist as well as magician, the repository of tradition, the source of sacred knowledge. His primary duty is that of divination; in case of sickness he seeks the cause in trance or dream. Every male shaman has a spirit-wife in the underworld and every female shaman has a spirit husband, whom she visits in her dreams. These tutelary spouses are the strength and inspiration of Saora shamans. The marriages are absolutely real in their own minds, and they believe themselves to be chosen by the direct intervention of the guardian spirit through whom they subsequently have immediate access to the world of spirits and deities. A female shaman may have to be wooed by a spirit for a long time before she consents to accept him as husband. Usually such calls from the spirit world come as hallucinations or dream-experiences, and a girl may appear to be deranged and ill until the 'marriage' has been performed.

After the marriage, the shaman's spirit husband visits her regularly and lies with

her until dawn. He may even take her away into the jungle for days at a time. In due course a spirit-child is born, and the ghostly father brings it every night to be nursed by the human wife. This imaginary marriage is no bar to marrying a human husband, but the dream-spouse seems as real to a Saora shaman as her husband of flesh and blood, and it is believed that she will become a spirit herself after death.

The Master of Ecstasy

The term 'shaman', now widely current in anthropological literature, was first applied to the religious practitioners of central and northern Asia, where the magico-religious life of most of the indigenous population traditionally centres on the shaman. He is the dominating figure, though in many tribes there are also priests concerned with the performance of animal sacrifices, and every head of a family is also the head of the domestic cult. The ecstatic state is considered to be the supreme religious experience, and the shaman is the great master of ecstasy. Unlike persons possessed by spirits and temporarily in their power, the shaman controls spirits. He is able to communicate with the dead, or with demons and Nature spirits, without becoming their instrument (see SHAMAN).

Shamans are separated from the rest of society by the intensity of their religious experience, and in this sense they resemble the mystics of historic religions. The mental disposition which qualifies a person for the functions of a shaman points to an important feature of early priesthood. Among many peoples, priests must display a certain excitability of temperament, which in modern Western society might be considered as bordering on a psychopathic condition. The ability to fall into trance may be an essential prerequisite for the performance of certain rites, in which case only those capable of such psychological states are suitable as priests.

Medicine-men often receive their knowledge and inspiration from the gods, exerting their powers through spells and by manipulating objects thought to possess mysterious efficacy: dried monkeys' heads, an important ingredient in curing disease, for sale in a Nigerian market

Most priests in primitive societies act simply as agents of their fellow men, and are intent only on obtaining material benefits for them

The importance attached to ecstasy as a visible means of divine inspiration is shown in the many instances of priests obtaining their initiation by inducing a state of delirium or trance through the use of narcotics or fasting. The convulsive movements and seemingly irrational utterances of the inspired person suggest that his own controlling will is in abeyance, and that an external force or being has taken possession of his body. In many cases a god or spirit is supposed to speak through his mouth and determine his actions.

Not all priests need to undergo a formal course of training, or be initiated into the mystery of relations with supernatural powers by a specific ritual. Those who succeed to the priesthood through inheritance, for example, are usually believed to have powers acquired by birth into a family or clan. On the other hand, there are many pre-literate societies which require potential religious practitioners to be subjected to a rigorous training in self-control and in the sacred lore of the tribe. Among the Inuit, for instance, the priests are trained in their profession from childhood.

Where priests receive formal instruction their education often consists of two different phases. During the first period the novice is under the care of an experienced practitioner, who initiates him into the body of religious beliefs and teaches him how to perform various rites. A later phase is devoted mainly to self-training, in the course of which the novice seeks mystic experiences, and through them a direct relationship with supernatural powers. During this preparation for the priesthood he may have to live in seclusion or submit himself to austerities such as prolonged fasting or exposure to the elements.

In some primitive societies the period of instruction and training culminates in an elaborate initiation ceremony which confirms upon the candidate the full status of an ordained priest.

In many societies, however, priests are trained in a much more casual way. Among the Ifugao tribe of the Philippines, for instance, there is no institutionalized method of initiating priests into the labyrinth of an immensely rich and complicated mythology. There is no organized priesthood recruited from a special social class. Any Ifugao possessing intellectual ability and a good memory may attach himself to an experienced priest of his kin-group or locality as an apprentice; but in many cases sons follow in the footsteps of fathers enjoying a reputation as knowledgeable and successful priests. Ifugao priests also act as chroniclers and genealogists, for the frequently repeated incantations of ancestors give them an unrivalled knowledge of genealogies. The ministrations of priests form an essential part of all the innumerable rituals by which Ifugaos mark social as well as religious occasions.

Some of these rituals may extend over a whole day or even over several days, and the demands they make on the memory can be prodigious. The priests are of supreme importance to the Ifugao, for only they are thought to be capable of manipulating the gods and coaxing them to aid human endeavour. The relation between man and deities is looked upon as one of bargaining and of give and take, and the priests must exert all their skill to get favourable terms for their clients. Ifugao gods are regarded as morally neutral and unconcerned with the ethical conduct of men, and the priests do not take any stand on moral questions. They do not feel any need to behave in an exemplary way in their private lives, nor do they attempt to influence the moral conduct of their clients and fellow villagers.

Government by the Supreme Power of Chinese religion was carried out through a bureaucracy, and the high gods were generally approached through honourable men, priests or monks: figure of a monk, Sung Dynasty (980-1279 AD)

G Tomsich Spectrum

Unlike Christian priests or other holy men who regard themselves as representatives of a moral order that derives its sanction from a supreme deity, most priests in primitive societies act simply as the agents of their fellow men, and are intent only on obtaining material benefits for them. They have no interest in giving them any guidance in moral matters. Priests of this kind do not preach to men, but address themselves solely to the deities they seek to influence.

In addition, whatever the circumstances in which a priest acts as an intermediary between men and gods, the quality which makes his mediation effective often resides in his office rather than in himself as an individual. Consequently it may not greatly matter what sort of person he is, socially, psychologically, or morally.

A Sense of Awe

Because of his usefulness and power, a priest may enjoy considerable prestige and authority, but his position is so precarious and easily damaged that he tends to be surrounded with taboos to protect him against harmful contacts with forces that might render him ineffective. The social position of priests varies greatly from one society to another. The ability to experience states of trance and spirit possession is usually not combined with great economic efficiency or political acumen, and priests who on ritual occasions will act as the mouthpieces of gods may be withdrawn and comparatively ineffective personalities in ordinary life. On the other hand, someone who holds the position of clan-priest by hereditary right, and functions as the sole mediator between a powerful clan and its protective deities, may derive considerable prestige and material

G. Tomsich/Spectrum

There is frequently a close relationship between kingship and the priesthood; in the Maya civilization of Central America, the high priest of a city ranked equally with the 'ruler of men', who was himself educated in magic: relief showing a masked figure carrying a ceremonial sword

advantages from his office.

In some societies, as among certain West African tribes for instance, priests tend to increase the respect in which they are held by enveloping their proceedings in mystery. They often create a sense of awe and fear among the laity, in order to enhance their power. The special and sometimes fantastic attire donned by some priests is intended partly to distinguish them from the rest of the population, and partly to impress deities and spirits or avert malignant forces. Masks worn by priests have similar purposes, and occasionally signify a mystical connection between the priest and an ancestor spirit or deity whom he embodies.

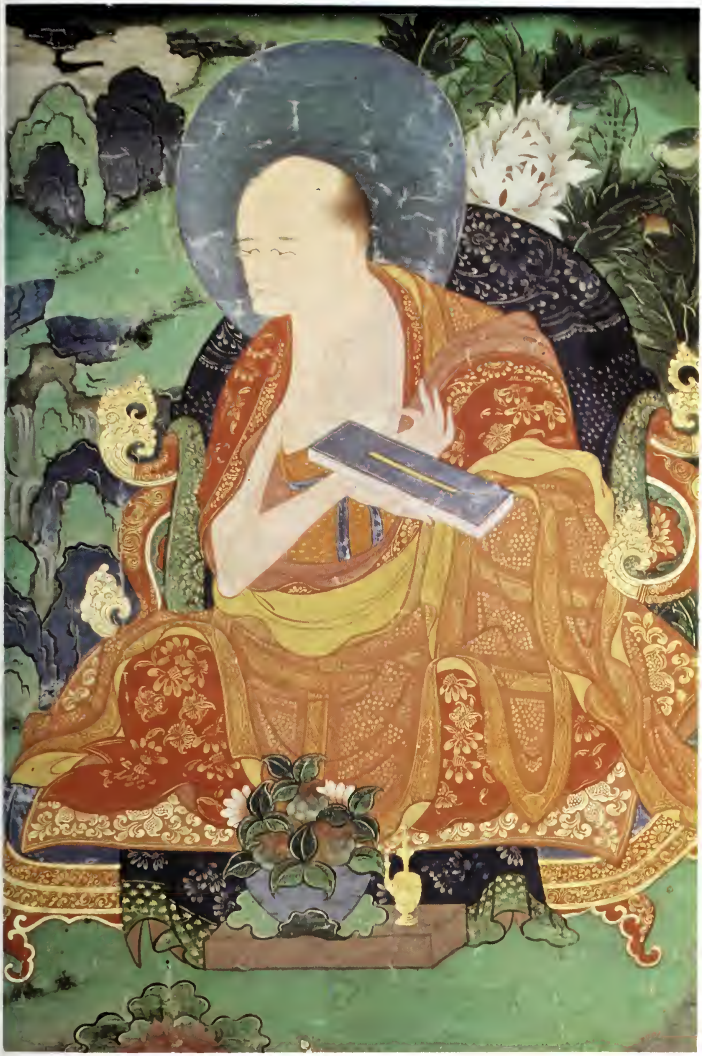
In primitive societies priesthood is not exclusively a male occupation, and there are many instances of women functioning as priestesses and magicians. It is rare for them to be debarred from marriage, just as male priests are usually expected to marry and lead a life not basically different from that of other members of their society. Though their priestly status may provide them with certain privileges and material benefits, occupational specialization among primitive populations normally does not go far enough to free religious practitioners from the need to till the soil or herd cattle. At that level of material development priesthood is seldom an exclusive profession, and a priest does not diminish his spiritual status or prestige by engaging in normal secular occupations.

Restrictions on the sexual life of priests and priestesses are usually found in the more advanced civilizations. Primitive peoples rarely place any value on celibacy and chastity, and priests are expected to have normal family lives. They may be obliged to abstain from sexual activities during periods of training or at the time of major rituals, in the same way as fasting is regarded as a preparation for spiritual experiences; but in general primitive priests are not expected to lead a life basically different from that of laymen.

C. VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF

Clergy and Laity

Specialist priesthoods also play an important role in more complex societies where, although priestly functions may be performed by people who are not priests – the head of the family may say grace at meals, for example – the community's dealings with God or the gods are mainly conducted by the 'clergy' who are distinguished from the 'laity', the non-specialists who are by implication incapable of, or at least less efficient at, communication with the divine. This implication has been resented on occasion, and some Protestant Christian groups insist that all believers are priests. Some refer to their functionaries as 'ministers' or 'elders' rather than 'priests' (the English word is derived from Greek *presbyteros*,



Lamas, the priests of Tibet, at one time made up 20 per cent of the population: many lamas, and nuns, were regarded as reincarnations of saintly predecessors: 17th-century painting

G. Tomsich/Spectrum

'elder') and deny them any unduly exalted status. At the other extreme, the members of some priesthoods have claimed to be gods themselves. This is true of the Brahmins in India, who belong to a hereditary caste, and some of the lamas of Tibet are regarded as divine (see BRAHMAN; CASTE; LAMAS).

In the ancient world the principal duty of priests was to offer sacrifices and conduct the major rituals of the gods. They also discerned the will of the gods: in Rome the augurs were priests, for example, and the classical oracles were staffed by priests (see AUGURY; ORACLES). Appealing to the gods for help, for individuals or for the community as a whole, curing the sick and battling against evil spirits, were also priestly functions. A priest was usually attached to a particular holy place, the shrine or temple of his god (unlike Christian clergy, who are not tied to sacred sites in this way).

In the Near East the gods were served by official state priesthoods, with the implication that priestly authority was one aspect of the royal government. The king himself was a priest, the chief priest in fact, though in practice he delegated most of his sacerdotal duties to others (see KING). In Mesopotamia, for instance, there were various classes of priests, who performed the temple ceremonies, who took omens and interpreted dreams, who were called in to cure diseases and expel demons, and there were also priestesses, who acted as sacred prostitutes (see MESOPOTAMIA; PROSTITUTION). A priest usually inherited his office and he lived on the offerings made to the god, including the food which in theory the god himself ate. The god owned the land and an important task of the priests was to administer his estates for him.

In Greece and Rome where, in historical times at least, there were no kings, the political importance of priesthoods was minimal. Many priests served only for short periods and were not expected to put aside their secular activities. The most revered priest in Attica was the chief priest of Eleusis (see ELEUSIS), who was chosen from the priestly clan of the Eumolpidae. He served for life and was the one who revealed the secrets of the Mysteries to the initiates. On appointment he took the name of Hierophantes, and formally threw his old name into the sea.

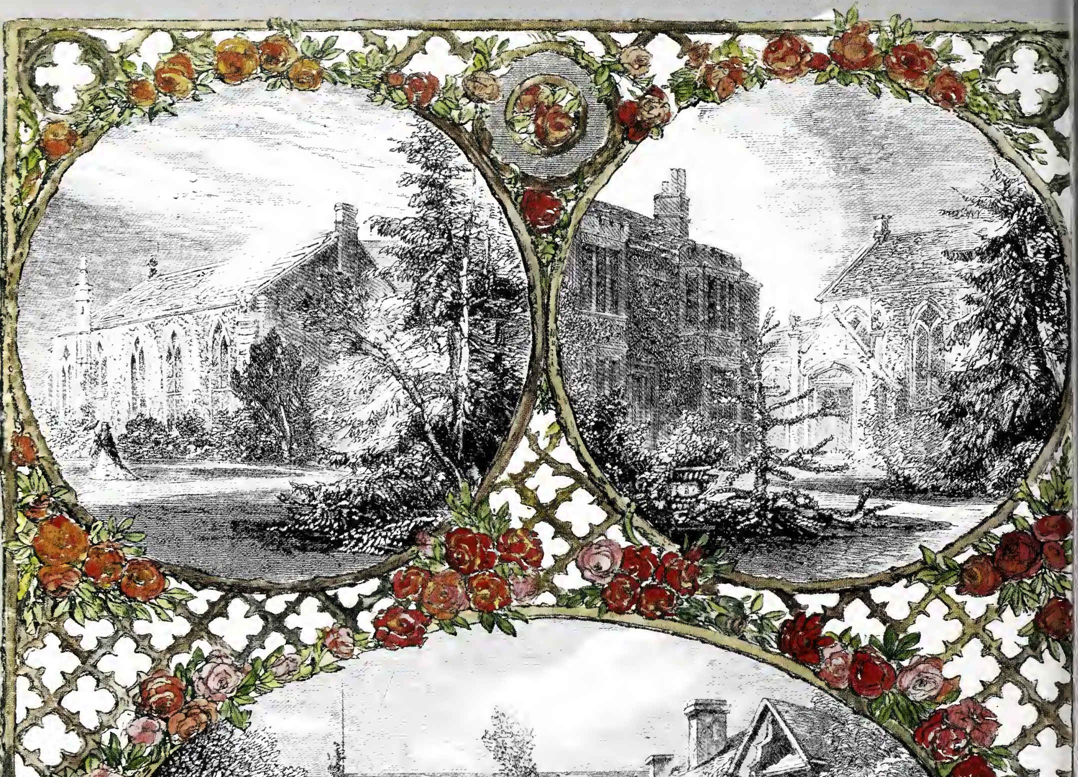
In Rome the formal worship of the gods by the community as a whole, and the rituals which it entailed, as distinct from the devotions of pious individuals, were conducted by various priests, presided over by the pontiffs (*pontifices*) – originally concerned with the rituals accompanying bridge-building – whose chief was the Pontifex Maximus. Among other priests were the *flamines*, of whom the most important were the flamen Dialis, the flamen Martialis and the flamen Quirinalis. The flamen Dialis, the priest of Jupiter, and his wife were bound by all sorts of taboos and restrictions to protect them from pollution (see JUPITER; MARS).

In the Old Testament, the patriarchs, including Noah, Abraham and Jacob, are recorded offering sacrifices to Yahweh, but later legislation prohibited all sacrificial offerings except those made in the Temple by qualified priests. The priesthood has almost entirely disappeared from Judaism, and Islam 'allows no priest between man and God' (see ISLAM; JUDAISM).

In the New Testament, St Paul mentions various Christian officials – apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in tongues (1 Corinthians 12.28). An organized Christian hierarchy gradually developed, founded on the doctrine that Christ had given priestly authority to the apostles, who in turn passed their authority to the bishops who succeeded them, who in their turn consecrated other bishops, so that through this 'apostolic succession' a properly ordained bishop has inherited, as it were, an authority originally stemming from Christ himself. In the Orthodox, Roman and Anglican Churches priests are ordained by a bishop in a ceremony whose central outward ritual is the laying on of hands, a sign of the transmission of apostolic authority and grace (see SACRAMENTS; WANDERING BISHOPS). The laying on of hands in the appointment of officials by the original apostles is mentioned in Acts (chapter 6).

FURTHER READING: E. O. James, *The Nature and Function of Priesthood* (Thames & Hudson, 1955).

PRINCE - Abode of Love



With money from his wealthy admirers, the Rev. H.J. Prince, self-styled messiah, founded his Agapemone or Abode of Love, a place of luxury and pleasure where he lived surrounded by numerous 'soul brides'

H.J.PRINCE

THE REVEREND Henry James Prince has the distinction of having founded his own religious sect for his personal benefit and gratification; and seldom has it been done so brazenly or successfully. His successor, the Rev. J.H. Smyth-Pigott, was equally unscrupulous, and between the two of these rogues there was little difference, although there is no record that they ever met.

H. J. Prince was born in April 1811. He took holy orders in the Church of England, being ordained in 1840 to the curacy of the small parish of Charlinch, near Bridgwater, Somerset. The Rector was named Starkey, and like Prince he was an excellent speaker. He soon recognized in his curate the voice of God, and within a year a great revival of religion had started at Charlinch, bringing squires, farmers, gentlemen and their ladies, farm workers and their wives, flocking to the church.

Prince possessed considerable fascination for women, and he did not withhold his powers. There were scandalous rumours about his behaviour and, when these reached the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Prince was forbidden to preach.

The Prophet Elijah

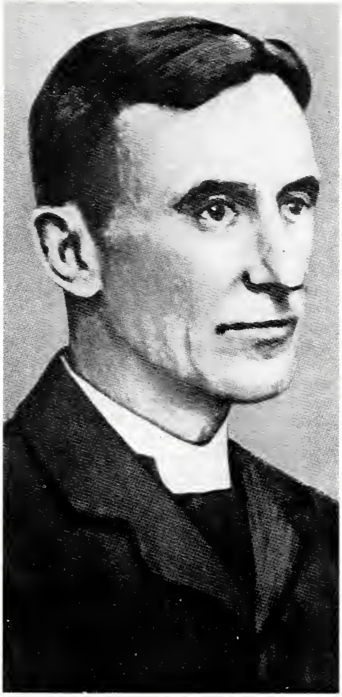
There seems little doubt that from 1843 onwards Brother Prince became subject to delusions. In May of that year he wrote a long letter to his brother-in-law, explaining how the Holy Ghost had come to be settled and fixed in the personality of H. J. Prince. Having been inhibited by his own Bishop, Prince fell foul of the Bishop of Salisbury and when he tried to officiate as curate of Stoke by Clare, Suffolk, he was dismissed by the Bishop of Ely. Then, to use his own words, 'prevented from preaching within the pale of the established Church, Bro. Prince, after six months' waiting on God for guidance in faith and prayer, proceeded to preach without it'.

Prince now boldly denounced the Church, and he and Starkey started preaching in the open and in barns around Charlinch. One day, when addressing a meeting in a field, Prince suddenly announced that he was the prophet Elijah, yet not many of his listeners appeared to find this revelation anything out of the ordinary.

Prince then went to Brighton, where he took over the running of a chapel in Windsor Street. The town was a popular resort of wealthy people, and to attract their attention to his chapel he wrote and published several religious books. His masterpiece was *The Great Declaration*, in which he revealed that God had selected him to be the perfect man, incapable of sin.

Brother Prince claimed to be immortal and also said that those who had faith in him would never die: anyone who followed his teaching was assured of immortality. Furthermore, if they were strong in the faith, the love act between the sexes would be entirely innocent. Fleshly pleasures could be enjoyed in a completely spiritual way, especially with Brother Prince.

Prince's first marriage, to a woman old enough to be his mother, had been – according to him – God's will. God was certainly on his side, because the lady's income was enough to provide him at Charlinch with the luxuries usually denied a humble curate. She died while he was still at Charlinch, and within a few weeks of the funeral he was courting the Rev. Starkey's daughter, whom he quickly married.


Mary Evans Picture Library

Syndication International

***Facing page* At Spaxton in Somerset a complex of luxuriously appointed buildings provided accommodation for the members of the Agapemone *Above left* John Hugh Smyth-Pigott, a curate in the Church of England, declared that he was God in 1902, three years after Prince's death; shortly afterwards he moved down to Spaxton as the new messiah *Above right* Ruth Preece, a wealthy young woman, became Smyth-Pigott's 'chief soul bride': it was for fathering her illegitimate child that Smyth-Pigott was eventually inhibited by his bishop**

Billiards in Chapel

Prince returned from Brighton to Somerset with £30,000 in his pockets, most of it contributed by his society admirers. He and his followers travelled in a long procession of carriages with liveried coachmen and postilions, and at Weymouth the entourage stayed at the Royal Hotel, where Prince held a reception and announced his plans for the setting up of an Agapemone or Abode of Love. Those who wished to be saved, he said, need only make gifts to help the new community.

Some 200 local people of influence, invited especially for this purpose, crowded into the ballroom and agreed to give up all or part of their worldly possessions in order to be saved. With this money, a considerable sum, Prince in 1849 bought a plot of land on the outskirts of Spaxton. He began to style himself 'the Beloved', while Starkey and a brother of Prince's were 'the Two Anointed Ones'. There were also an 'Angel of the Last Trumpet', 'Seven Witnesses' and other divine officials.

The house at Spaxton was large, with an unfinished chapel, stables, outhouses and several cottages. Accommodation was allotted to the disciples according to the money they had subscribed. An even larger mansion was built on the adjoining land, and the chapel was converted into a kind of drawing-room with a high altar, easy chairs, sofas and a billiard table.

It took two years to complete the building of the Agapemone, and large numbers of workmen were employed; when it was finished it was extremely luxurious. The estate was self-sufficient and consisted of about 200 acres. There were at first about 60 disciples in residence, with their servants. The Queen-Dowager's carriage was bought, and in this Brother Prince was driven in style along the country lanes behind four white horses. When he visited the Great Exhibition in London, he was preceded by outriders.

An old villager in Spaxton described in 1927 how Brother Prince drove through Bridgwater in his carriage and pair with a footman sounding a horn and crying: 'All hail! All hail! The Messiah!' To his followers, Prince was God. Letters addressed to 'Our Lord God, Spaxton, Somerset' reached him safely. And because he claimed to be divine, Prince took to his bed those of his sister disciples whom he desired. Their children were born in comfort and secrecy at Bristol, and were later given quarters in the house, but kept out of sight when visitors called. The women regarded it as an honour to be taken by the Beloved, who explained in his work *The Little Open Book* (1856) that Christ had appointed him for these special tasks.

A wave of religious fanaticism swept across the Bridgwater district. Many otherwise intelligent people were convinced when Brother Prince rose and announced that he was the final revelation of the will of God.

The Disgrace of Death

With time, Prince took less interest in the theological aspects of religion, and there was considerable open debauchery in the Abode, without pretence of prayer or devotion. One of his followers, Miss Paterson, became Prince's 'soul bride', and when she became pregnant Brother Prince announced that there would be no birth, just as there was no death for his followers. But when Miss Paterson's newborn child could hardly be so lightly dismissed, Prince explained that it was Satan's final despairing act against God.

Several of the followers were upset by the open immorality and left the community, bringing lawsuits against Prince. One of these cases resulted in a complete exposure of the way the Beloved and his colleagues 'crept into houses, leading silly captive women' and 'turning the Grace of Lord Jesus Christ into licentiousness'. The suit was heard in the Court of Chancery in the summer of 1860. The Vice-Chancellor referred in the strongest terms to the disgraceful revelations, and a bill was filed to recover £5,728 from Prince, the property of three sisters.

After this, Prince led a retired life and a cloak of silence fell over the Agapemone. The funds of the brotherhood fell low, for no work had ever been done in the Abode: every day and night had been spent in pleasure. But the Beloved's good fortune did not fail him. In the late 1880s a wealthy London merchant presented Prince with all his property, worth some £10,000, and moved into the Abode to serve the community as butler.

Finally, in January 1899, when he was almost 88, Brother Prince relinquished his claim to immortality. He was buried under the lawn, close by the bodies of those of his followers who had also failed to demonstrate that they possessed the secret of everlasting life.

No headstones marked the graves of the departed, who were buried standing up. The remaining brothers and sisters concluded that, by dying, their companions had let them down. Death was considered a disgrace, an admission of sin.

This should be the end of the story of the Abode of Love, but it is not. In 1890 and for several years afterwards there had been a remarkable revival of interest in the Agapemone. Several prominent members of the Salvation Army had joined. At Clapton, London, the Children of the Resurrection, as they now called themselves, built, in 1892, a magnificent new church, the Ark of the Covenant, seating about 400 people, at a cost of some £16,000. The preacher at the opening ceremony in 1896 was the Rev. J. H. Smyth-Pigott, who was to be Brother Prince's successor at Spaxton.

The Beloved's Successor

After a varied career as a university man, sailor before the mast, curate in the Church of England, and evangelist in the Salvation Army, Smyth-Pigott was converted to the views of Brother Prince. In his opening sermon at Clapton he declared that he expected Christ to return that very day and descend upon the congregation.

It was on Sunday, 7 September 1902, that Smyth-Pigott stood before a crowded congregation in the Ark of the Covenant and publicly announced his divinity. According to one report, he revealed that he was going to walk across water. Some of the believers fell on their knees and shouted for joy. On the next Sunday some 6000 people waited from dawn until the evening to see the new messiah arrive in his carriage. When he appeared he was greeted with loud hisses and catcalls; hundreds of people stormed over the railings to enter the church, but the doors were closed. The messiah at once drove back to his home, Cedar Lodge, followed by a shower of stones, bricks and umbrellas. Smyth-Pigott's declaration of divinity was greeted with scorn by General Booth of the Salvation Army, and the Plymouth Brethren regarded the claim as 'wicked and dishonourable'.

Smyth-Pigott moved down to Spaxton, where after some time an attractive girl named Ruth Preece went to live with him as his wife. Smyth-Pigott had been married since August 1886, but his wife accepted the newcomer, who was one of three wealthy sisters. In 1906 a male child was born to Miss Preece, the records at Somerset House showing that the father was John Hugh Smyth-Pigott, Clerk in Holy Orders. This led to his being inhibited by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, the court finding him guilty of 'immorality, uncleanness, and wickedness of life'. But Smyth-Pigott was unconcerned. 'I am God,' he said. 'It does not matter what they do. There is no such thing as marriage at the Agapemone. We are all brothers and sisters in God.' Less than a year later a daughter was born to 'Sister Ruth'.

At this time there were nearly 100 women in the Abode, but few men. Sister Ruth was 'bride-in-chief', and Mrs Smyth-Pigott lived in her own apartments.

Smyth-Pigott died in March 1927, a tired old man of 75. It was reported that the servants were unpaid, working for love and receiving only a little pocket money. In 1955 60-year-old Miss Ruth Ranken of Barnet revealed that she had been brought up as a member of the sect, and was still one in spirit. Brother Prince had founded it, and had been known as 'the Messenger'. On his deathbed in 1899 he had handed to Smyth-Pigott a 'horn of power'. Thereafter, said Miss Ranken, the true personality of Smyth-Pigott became clear – he was the same person as Jesus Christ. Miss Ranken said she had stayed at Spaxton many times, and was present at the Ark in 1902 when Smyth-Pigott proclaimed himself not as the Messiah but as the Son of Man.

In 1962 the house at Spaxton was sold and the story of the Abode of Love came to an end.

(See also MESSIANIC MOVEMENTS.)

JOHN MONTGOMERY

The goddess Athene, it was said, came to live with Proclus, for this 5th-century Neoplatonist combined his prolific output of philosophical treatises with a devout life of prayer and dutiful observance of pagan rites

PROCLUS

THE BEST KNOWN of the later Neoplatonists (see NEOPLATONISM), Proclus (410-485 AD) was also the most influential during the Middle Ages. There are two sources for his life: a pious little biography written by Marinus, his disciple and successor in the headship of Plato's school at Athens, and the fragments of the *Life of Isidore* by Damascius, a rather rambling work which contained a great deal of information about a large number of later Platonic philosophers, written a little before 500 AD.

Proclus belonged to a legal family from Xanthus in Lycia, where he lived as a child. His father intended him to be a lawyer, but after beginning to study for this profession at Alexandria he decided to devote himself to philosophy and eventually went to join the Platonic school, the Academy at Athens, at about the end of the year 430 AD. The Diadochus, or successor of Plato, who was head of the school at that time was Plutarch of Athens (not to be confused with the biographer and essayist Plutarch of Chaeronea, who lived about 300 years earlier). This Plutarch was a convinced late Neoplatonist. At the time of the arrival of Proclus he was very old, and most of the teaching in the Academy was done by Syrianus, the successor of Plutarch in the headship, who became Proclus's venerated master.

These late Neoplatonists were a small closed group of devout pagans in an officially Christian world, often closely interrelated and living together in considerable intimacy. Proclus lived in the house of Syrianus, and was initiated into the secret rites of theurgy (see THEURGY) by Plutarch's daughter Asclepigeneia. Under Syrianus he went through the first two parts of the normal course of Neoplatonic philosophical studies, the study of Aristotle (conceived as an indispensable preliminary intellectual exercise) and the study of Plato (regarded as a 'mystagogy' or initiation into divine wisdom). The third and final part of the course was the study of the 'theologians', that is to say the Orphic and Chaldean writings supposed to contain revelations from the gods themselves, to the understanding of which the study of Plato according to Neoplatonic principles of interpretation was thought to provide the key. But Syrianus died before embarking on this part of the course, and Proclus was left to complete the study of the 'theologians' by himself, with the help of the voluminous commentaries of his predecessors; this he did all too thoroughly, as his works show. He became himself the Platonic successor, probably inheriting the position from Syrianus in about 437, and was referred to by later generations as Proclus Diadochus.

Philosopher and Rain-Maker

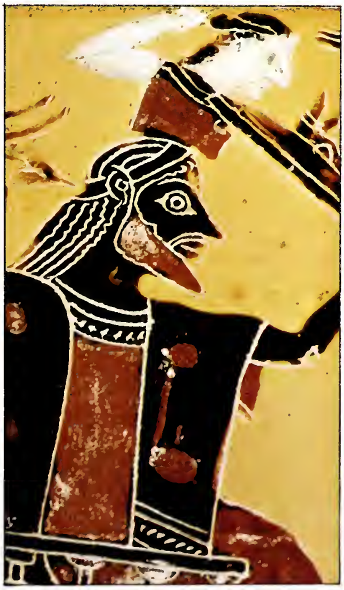
Proclus never married, and lived an intensely austere and hard-working life, combining the activities of an exceptionally industrious professor with a monastic life of prayer and ritual observance. He lectured and wrote a great deal and held discussions with other philosophers, while he also spent much of the night in contemplative prayer and ceremoniously venerated the sun with triple prostrations at dawn, noon and sunset. He conscientiously evoked the gods according to the rites which he had learnt from Asclepigeneia, and practised rain magic for the good of the community. Eventually the goddess Athene herself, so it was said, came to live in his house when her statue was taken from the Parthenon to Constantinople. But none the less he lived for the most part on good terms with his Christian fellow citizens and with the officials of the Imperial government, which had already several times forbidden all forms of pagan cult, under heavy penalties, but rather ineffectively. (There was still a minority of high Imperial officials who had sympathies with Neoplatonic paganism, and their influence may have helped the Academy: it continued in possession of its large endowments until its closure by Justinian in 529, and perhaps even managed to retain some of them afterwards.) There was only one short period when Proclus had to leave Athens and spend a year in Asia Minor, apparently because of Christian hostility. He died peacefully of old age in 485.

In his long and industrious life Proclus wrote a very great deal, and a fair proportion of his works survives. He produced commentaries on Aristotle's logical works and on a number of dialogues of Plato; of these some of the most important survive, notably those on the *Timaeus* and the *Parmenides*. Of a number of short works on particular questions, three survive, mostly in medieval Latin translations. However, an elementary introduction to Plato, and possibly another to Aristotle, have not survived. He wrote a group of systematic expositions of Platonism, of which the *Elements of Theology*, a series of propositions modelled on the *Elements* of Euclid, is the best introduction to his thought. The greatest work of Proclus is the *Platonic Theology* and he also wrote works on mathematics and astronomy, of which three or four survive; works on theurgy, which have perished except for small fragments, no doubt owing to Christian hostility to their subject matter; and a number of hymns, of which seven survive.

Proclus is not easy or attractive to read. Except in the *Elements of Theology* he is excessively long-winded, and his style is pompous and heavily laden with the technical terms of late Greek philosophy. But his concern for clear and complete exposition and logical coherence makes him (when one has mastered the technicalities) often easier to understand than Plotinus (see PLOTINUS).

It is difficult to separate the thought of Proclus clearly from that of his predecessors, and especially from that of his master Syrianus. He is best considered as the representative of the distinctive kind of Neoplatonism which began with Iamblichus (c 250–326 AD) and reached its fullest philosophical development in the school of Athens in the 5th and 6th centuries AD. This did not claim to be in any way original. It purported to be the one true wisdom of the ancient masters, Pythagoras and Plato, correctly interpreted, with such modest help as Aristotle could give, according to the tradition of the Platonic school, and providing the only key to the understanding of the revelations which the gods had given to men through the 'theologians'. The Neoplatonic masters Plotinus and Porphyry, and above all Iamblichus and Syrianus, were not regarded, and would not have wished to be regarded, as original philosophers but as men who had, more or less, understood the true meaning of the Platonic writings and other sacred ancient texts. But this was no mere subordination of reason to authority. It was a matter of faith with the later Neoplatonists that the writings of Plato and the other ancient masters and the divine oracles contained a single, perfectly coherent and consistent system of thought, and that there could not really be anything in them which might seem to the late Neoplatonic mind to be illogical, irreligious or immoral. So the texts were very firmly interpreted, often by very odd methods, to produce a meaning which seemed to the philosophers rationally and religiously satisfactory.

The birth of Athene from the head of her father Zeus: detail from a cup of the 6th century BC. Proclus upheld the worship of the gods of ancient Greece at a time when Christianity had become the official religion of the Empire



Michael Holford British Museum

Return to the Divine

Philosophy, for the later as for the earlier Neoplatonists, was primarily concerned with the truth about the Divine and the way by which man could return to it. Proclus presents the universe as an eternally existing, great and complex ordered structure. In it the ineffably transcendent First Principle, the ultimate One, expresses itself on all the levels of being: in the intelligible world and the realm of soul, and in the material world, whose matter is now no longer thought of as the principle of evil (as it was for Plotinus), but as wholly good and proceeding immediately from the One, so that material things have powers which can help to bring men back to the Divine. The return to God in later Neoplatonism is not brought about, as it was for Plotinus, through the discovery of the true, higher self which 'does not come down' but remains eternally in the divine realm. Man descends wholly to this world, and for his return to God needs the help of the divine powers. The One manifests itself on every level of being through the 'henads', unities and unifying principles which are identified with the gods of paganism; and men can return to it through unification each with his appropriate henad.

Theurgy is generally said to be superior to philosophy, and to be alone capable of bringing about the final stages of the return. But it is not entirely clear what theurgy meant to Proclus and other late Neoplatonists. It is the supreme expression of *pistis*, 'faith', one of the three great powers which unite and bring back all things to their divine source, the others being truth and love. It certainly included ritual magic which makes use of the occult powers implanted in material things by the gods, but it may sometimes have extended to include something like mystical prayer as well. In any case, preoccupation with theurgy was not for Proclus and his school any excuse for being vague, casual and incoherent in philosophy. They aimed at, and, granted their initial assumptions, very often achieved, the highest possible degree of logical rigour, consistency and completeness.

A. H. ARMSTRONG

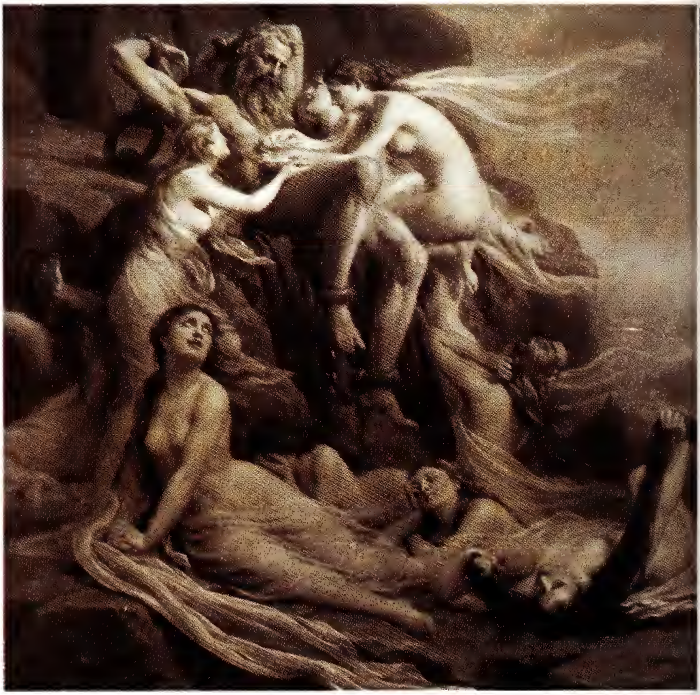
FURTHER READING: E. R. Dodds ed. *Proclus: The Elements of Theology* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1923).

A Greek god notable for his efforts to improve man's lot, Prometheus first appears as a crafty trickster, but is more familiar in his later role of wise teacher of the arts of civilization and heroic opponent of tyranny

PROMETHEUS

THE OLDEST and fullest account of Prometheus comes from the poems of Hesiod (700 BC). Prometheus was a son of the Titan Iapetus. His brothers Atlas and Menoetius were both punished by Zeus for unruliness, and he too crossed the tyrannical ruler of heaven.

Gods and men were settling their affairs at Sicyon (not far from Corinth) prior to living apart. A bull was sacrificed, and Prometheus carved it up for eating. He served Zeus with a good meaty portion, but covered it in skin and paunch to make it look unattractive; while for mankind he set bones dressed up in juicy fat. Zeus complained at the unfair division, whereupon Prometheus, with a cunning smile, invited him to choose his own portion. Zeus promptly seized the better-looking one (the pious poet assures us that he was not really taken in), and ever since then men sacrificing animals have given the bones and other inedible parts to the gods, and divided the meat among themselves.



For thwarting the will of Zeus, Prometheus was bound to a rock; each day an eagle was sent to feast on his liver, which grew again during the night. In Aeschylus's play *Prometheus Bound* the hero is supported in his agony by a chorus of nymphs, a scene depicted by Fritz Zuber-Bühler in his painting *Prometheus and the Sea Nymphs*

The Theft of Fire

As Karl Meuli has explained, the procedures of blood sacrifice go back to the hunting societies of Paleolithic times. The basic reason for killing the animal was to eat it. The remains were treated with care and arranged in a particular way, perhaps in the hope of restoring the animal alive to the herds. The Greeks, however, had come to think of it as a feast which men shared with the gods, and they consequently felt the need to justify the inequality of the division. The Prometheus story does so: it is an example of pure myth, a story designed to account for a feature of the world we live in, its details governed by present facts. The wrapping of the bones in fat corresponds to actual Greek sacrificial practice; the wrapping of the meat in the paunch may reflect a method of roasting.

Angered at the deception, Hesiod continues, Zeus withheld fire from men (perhaps with the idea of preventing them from cooking their meat); he 'would not give it to the ash-trees', the source from which men derive it. But Prometheus stole it in a fennel-stalk and delivered it to us.

The story belongs to a widespread type (see FIRE). Fire is a magical element that does not seem to belong on earth, and the myths commonly tell how it was stolen from heaven – often by a bird – and hidden in the trees. In Greece there was more than one local story. At Argos the bringer of fire was the hero Phoroneus, son of a tree nymph. Prometheus appears at Athens as one of the gods specially worshipped by potters and smiths. There was an annual torch-race from the altar he shared with Hephaestus, perhaps originally a ceremony for renewing the purity of another altar's fire. Prometheus's fennel-stalk was not a torch, it was an established means of transporting fire, which will live safely and inconspicuously on the white inner pith. But the external similarity of the torch-race in Prometheus's honour might have been responsible for his being identified as the

The Defiance of Prometheus

Monarch of Gods and Daemons, and all Spirits
But One, who throng those bright and rolling worlds
Which Thou and I alone of living things
Behold with sleepless eyes! regard this Earth
Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
Requitest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope.
Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,
Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
And moments aye divided by keen pangs
Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair, – these are mine empire:–
More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
From thine unenvied throne, O Mighty God!
Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame
Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

. . .

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
Of their moon-freezing crystals, the bright chains
Eat with their burning cold into my bones.
Heaven's wingèd hound, polluting from thy lips
His beak in poison not his own, tears up
My heart; and shapeless sights come wandering by,
The ghastly people of the realm of dream,
Mocking me: and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
When the rocks split and close again behind:
While from their loud abysses howling throng
The genii of the storm, urging the rage
Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.
And yet to me welcome is day and night,
Whether one breaks the hoar frost of the morn,
Or starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs
The leaden-coloured east; for then they lead
The wingless, crawling hours, one among whom
– As some dark Priest hales the reluctant victim –
Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood
From these pale feet, which then might trample thee
If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.

Shelley *Prometheus Unbound*

thief who loped off with the stalk of fennel.

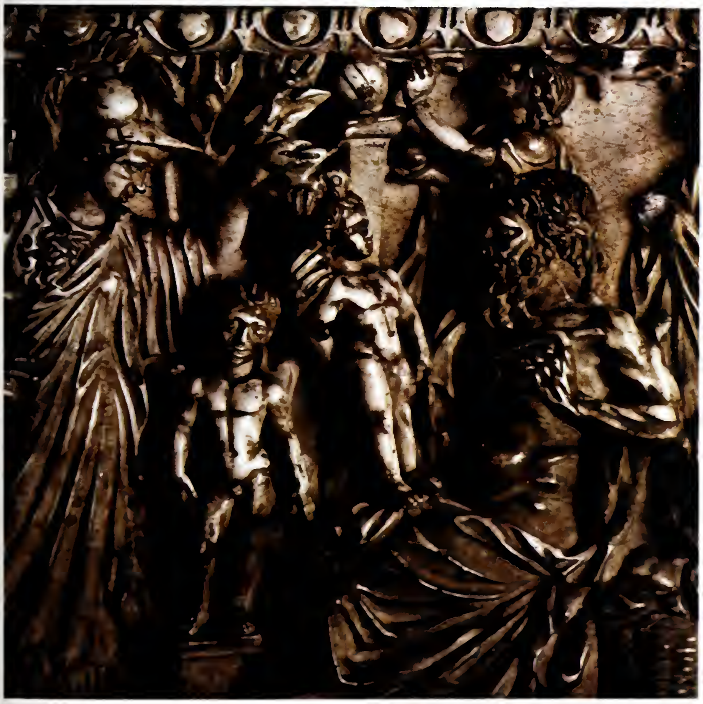
Zeus's next move was to send mankind a pernicious commodity to counterbalance the desirable one that they had got. On his instructions the divine craftsman Hephaestus made a beautiful girl, various goddesses adorned her, and Hermes gave her a deceitful disposition. She was named Pandora, and sent to Prometheus's foolish brother Epimetheus. Although Prometheus had warned him not to accept a present from Zeus, he married her, and all mortal women are her descendants. It was she who took the lid off the great jar in which all evils had been confined, letting them loose among us: only Hope remains in storage.

Many peoples have myths of the origin of women, as a separate event secondary to the creation of man. Eve was made from Adam's rib. Epimetheus was probably invented by someone who wanted to link the origin of women with the Prometheus story, but considered Prometheus himself to be too clever to be taken in by Zeus's trick. Prometheus's name suggested something like 'Forethought', so he was given a brother 'Afterthought' (as a *pro*logue has for its opposite an *epi*logue); a pair of brothers, one clever and one stupid, or one good and one bad, is a common theme in folktales. Genealogists later brought Prometheus, Epimetheus and Pandora into connection with Deucalion and Pyrrha. These were the ancestors of mankind in the mythical tradition of north and central Greece. After a flood of which they were the sole survivors, they had to throw stones behind them, and those thrown by Deucalion turned into men, those thrown by Pyrrha into women. This legend was reconciled with the story that women were descended from Pandora by making Pyrrha the daughter of Epimetheus and Pandora.

The jar of ills was an independent motif. Homer speaks of two such jars, in Zeus's keeping, one of ills and one of good things. Zeus dips in and dispenses to men as he thinks fit. Hesiod rather confusingly uses a single jar, primarily as a container of ills, but then also as a retainer of Hope. In daily life jars are used to store good things, but in myth they are useful for keeping evil spirits in bondage. It was much later, under the influence of the allegory of Cupid and Psyche, that Pandora's jar became a box.

Prometheus Bound

To prevent any further roguery, Zeus bound Prometheus in invincible bonds, and secured them by driving them through the thickness of a column. He then sent an eagle to feast on Prometheus's liver. Each night it grew again, and each day the eagle returned to its work, for constant repetition is proper to the torments of sinners. Later, however, Zeus's wrath abated, and he allowed his son Hercules to win glory by shooting the dutiful bird; yet Prometheus remains in bondage, for there is no thwarting the will of Zeus.



A late tradition identified Prometheus, the master craftsman, as the creator of mankind. He fashioned human shapes from clay, which were then animated by the goddess Athene: detail from a 3rd century sarcophagus

© Tomsich Spectrum Colour Library

Hesiod probably thought of Prometheus as being bound somewhere at the world's end, where his brother Atlas stands supporting the sky's weight. The column to which he is fastened may have a connection with the idea of pillars of heaven. This conception alternates in Eurasian folklore with that of a world tree or a world mountain which reaches up to the sky. In later versions of the Prometheus myth, the miscreant is shackled to a mountain – Caucasus, from the Greek viewpoint a remote eastern outpost of the earth. The story that the Argonauts saw Prometheus on their legendary Black Sea voyage might go back to a source of Hesiod's time.

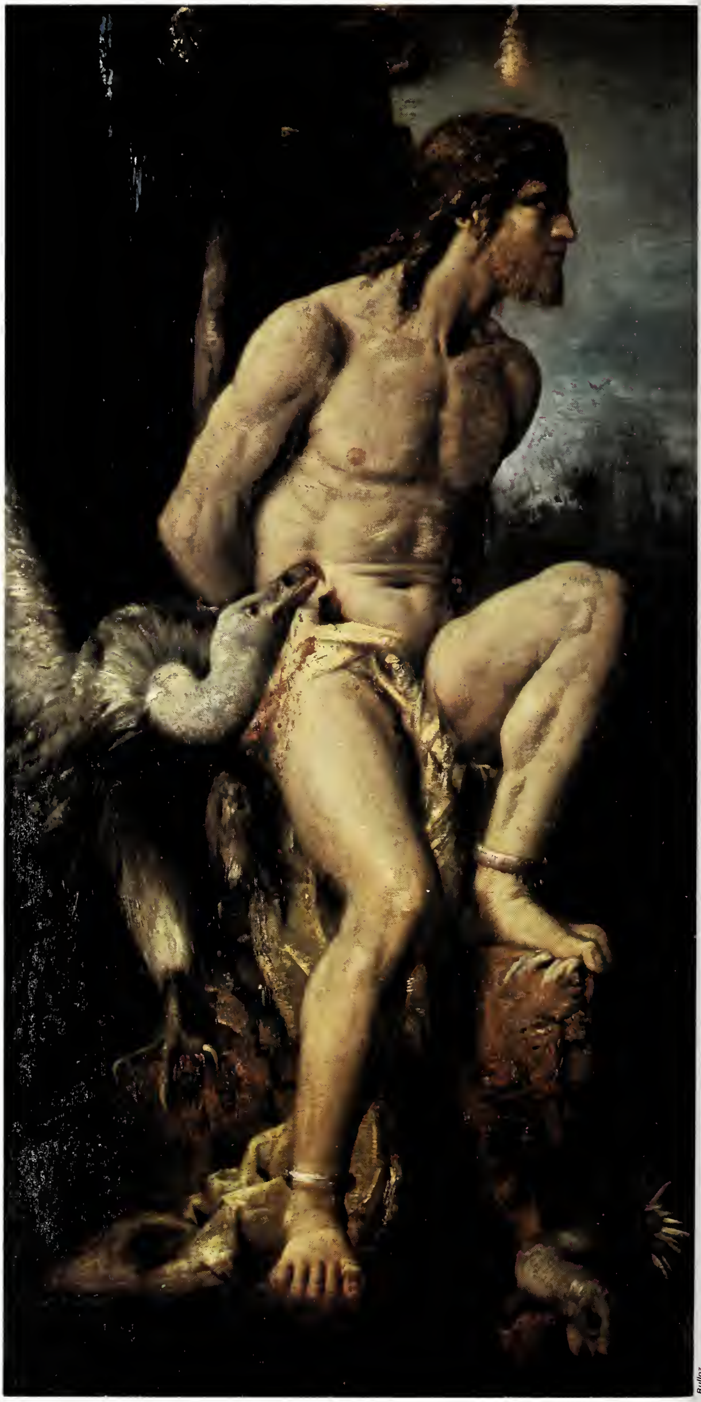
There is some evidence that the Caucasus is in fact the original home of the myth. Throughout that region it is related that earthquakes are caused by the struggles of a fierce giant who tried to steal the water of life from the mountain heights, or was otherwise impious, and as a punishment was bound by God to a pillar or in a cavern in the mountain. In many versions a vulture pecks at his heart. He will have to stay there till the end of the world, but when he does break free his rage will destroy everything. Some accounts add that he once found a helper who nearly freed him; we think of Hercules.

Local variants are more reminiscent of the punishments of other Greek sinners. The water of life flows just out of the prisoner's reach: in the same way Tantalus was tormented ('tantalized', as we still say) by food and drink that kept eluding his grasp. Or beside the giant a great wheel turns, day and night; he never takes his eyes off it, for when it stops, he will become free. Ixion was bound on a revolving wheel. Tityus, like Prometheus, was fed on by birds of prey – two vultures.

In the Caucasus, then, we have a straight Nature myth with logical connections (the pecking bird accounts for the prisoner's intermittent wrath); in Greece, a loose group of curious stories. The myth can be traced back to about 400 AD in the Caucasus (a similar one was current in the Hindu Kush when Alexander the Great got there, 700 years earlier), and there is no reason why it should not be thousands of years older. It would not be the only myth to reach Greece from the heart of Asia.

Prometheus Unbound

Prometheus's punishment forms the subject of Aeschylus's play *Prometheus Bound* (second quarter of the 5th century BC). He is now represented as having given men a great deal more than fire; he is a dignified culture hero instead of a trickster. Formerly men lived in caves, ignorant of everything. Prometheus taught them to measure seasons by the stars, to reckon and write, to harness animals to their service, to sail the sea, to make medicines, to interpret dreams and omens, to mine metals. By Aeschylus's time the Greeks were speculating about the origins of civilization (see TIME), and while some saw it as a self-activated evolutionary process, others thought in terms of a divine or human instructor: Prometheus, or Palamedes, or



Indomitable under torture, the Titan continues his heroic defiance of the despotic ruler of heaven: *The Torture of Prometheus* by G. Moreau treats a subject which held great appeal for the Romantic imagination

Bulloz

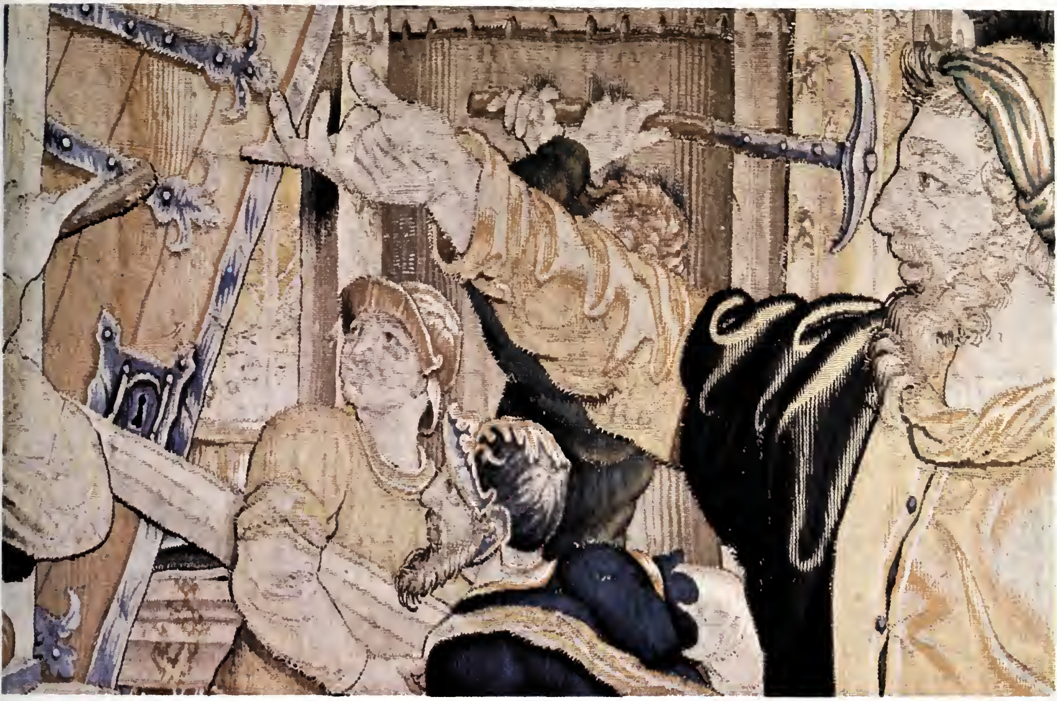
the centaur Chiron, or Hephaestus and Athene, each nomination being based on some hint in traditional legend.

Aeschylus shows Prometheus as defiantly proud of his achievements in spite of the punishment they have brought him. Man's advancement is for the good, and Zeus must come to terms with it. In mythical language, he must come to terms with Prometheus, for if the craftsmen of Athens flourish, their god must flourish too: they will not have him a helpless prisoner at the world's edge. The story that Hercules relieved him of the eagle is accordingly developed into a full release. *Prometheus Bound* was followed in stage performance by *Prometheus Unbound*. The play is lost, but we know that after the lapse of 30,000 years Hercules freed Prometheus. Zeus only relented under pressure, however. It had been prophesied that a certain goddess would bear a son mightier than his father. As an insatiable wooer of goddesses, Zeus badly needed to know who it was, and only Prometheus could tell him. (It was Thetis. She was accordingly married off to a mortal, and bore Achilles.)

In the 5th century BC Greece's true classicism was already in decline. Certain analogies might be drawn with the Romanticism of the 19th century; and Aeschylus's treatment of Prometheus could be taken as an expression of one trend of thought which exalted man's indomitable nature and capacity for self-improvement. But events discredited this kind of enthusiasm, and dialectic discredited myths about the gods. The dramatists dropped Prometheus. A historian of the end of the century rationalized him: he was a Scythian king whose subjects incarcerated him because he could not stop the incursions of the Eagle river, until Hercules diverted it. Sophists and philosophers composed variations on the myth to suit their purposes, in particular developing the idea of Prometheus as a craftsman who fashioned mankind from clay, which presently became a cliché. From at least the late 4th century, allegorical interpretations were put forward. The fire that Prometheus brought represented philosophy, and he was accordingly the first philosopher. For the Stoics he was that divine Forethought which shaped man in the beginning, and then, lodging in him, apprehended the utility of fire. His punishment is heart-eating worry.

M. L. WEST

FURTHER READING: C. Kerenyi, *Archetypal Images in Greek Religion*, 5 vols., vol. 1, *Prometheus* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1963); H.J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Mythology* (Dutton, rev. edn., 1959), on myths of fire see J.G. Frazer, *Apollodorus* (Loeb Library, Harvard Univ. Press, 1921, vol. 2 appendix), and his Myths of the Origin of Fire (Hacker reprint); world trees and mountains may be pursued in M. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New Am. Lib.).



G. Tomsich/Spectrum Colour Library

PROPHECY

The word 'prophet' originally signified the human spokesman of a god, so this special relationship with the divine has led to the association of the gift of prophecy with the possession of super-normal abilities and the performance of miracles, including the ability to see into the future *Above* Daniel's vision of the destruction of the Temple: detail from a 16th-century Flemish tapestry

The Hebrew prophets claimed inspiration by the divine will: but while their main object was to teach, warn and encourage, they might also foreshadow future events

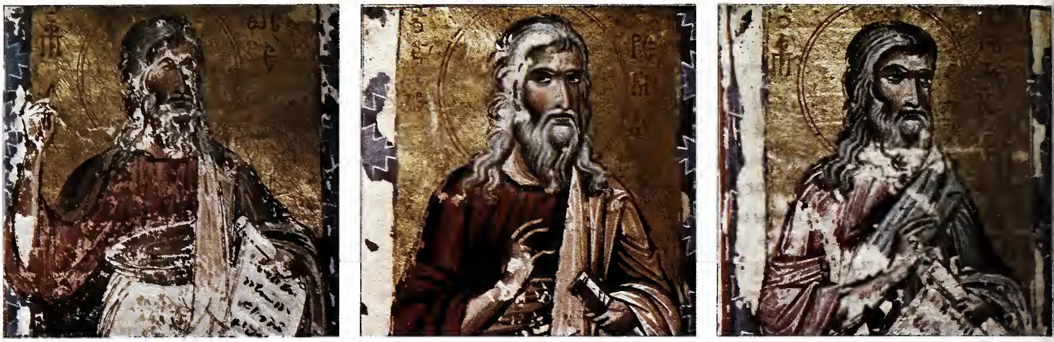
A WORD of Greek derivation, prophecy means 'speaking before'. In modern English it usually implies foretelling the future. Originally, however, this was not a prophet's essential function. He was the human spokesman of a god (pre-eminently of Yahweh, the God of Israel) and therefore a transmitter of divine messages, which might concern the future or might not.

Even in English the idea of prediction has not always been present. When St Luke's gospel describes the beating and taunting of the blindfolded Christ, his assailants say, 'Prophesy! Who is it that struck you?' (Luke 22.64). What is demanded here is proof of such supernormal knowledge as a true messiah ought to possess.

The Old Testament sometimes employs the term 'prophet' very loosely. For instance, Abraham is a 'prophet' because he is the friend of God. Moses and his brother Aaron are called prophets, and their sister Miriam a prophetess, each for a different reason: Moses as the appointed mouthpiece of divine laws, Aaron as their translator into practice, Miriam as a leader of song and dance in God's praise. The common factor in these four instances is a special relationship with Yahweh.

Miriam's song of triumph over the Egyptians (Exodus 15.20–21) may be the oldest thing in the Bible, a kind of 'spiritual' made up on the spot. It proves the antiquity of 'prophecy' in some sense. However, the Hebrew prophesying that led up to the poetry of Isaiah and Jeremiah had a more specific character. It took place in a state of ecstasy. The prophet was a *nabhi*, a 'called' person. The Holy Spirit of Yahweh breathed upon him, and he leaped and sang and saw visions, and burst out into oracular sayings. Nabhi enthusiasm could be contagious, like the dancing mania of the Middle Ages (see DANCING MANIA), attacking people not normally subject to it. It appears first in chapter 11 of the book of Numbers, where 70 Israelite elders undergo a temporary collective seizure in the presence

British Museum



From the 8th century BC, the words of the Hebrew prophets began to be written down, and have come down to us in the Old Testament. Hosea *(left)* attacked religious corruption. Jeremiah *(centre)*, who was priest as well as prophet, envisaged a future when the religion of Israel would develop into something greater and nobler. Ezekiel *(right)* is 'the least spontaneous of the prophets'. Illustrations from a Byzantine manuscript, 13th or 14th century

of Moses. In 1 Samuel (chapter 19) the rapture engulfs its victims against their will.

Men or women could prophesy. But when prophets began to combine in guilds, membership was apparently confined to men. The full-time nabhi who had the gift was often a strolling player with a flute, harp or tambourine. He wore a skin mantle with a leather belt. In the early period when Samuel and Saul flourished (c 1050–1015 BC) the nabhi might appear to be hardly more than a fortune teller, offering 'inspired' messages in return for presents and hospitality. But a graver theme always underlay his vocation, even at its most debased. Ostensibly at least, he received the word of Yahweh.

A Vessel of the Spirit

When we search for parallels outside Israel, we should recognize a distinction. The nabhi might look like a soothsayer or medium, but in fact he was not. Saul knew the difference, and banished persons of the latter type while respecting prophets (1 Samuel 28.3). Soothsaying and mediumship in the ancient world were based on techniques. Diviners had their pseudo-sciences of dream interpretation and omen-reading. Even the priestesses of Delphi, who succumbed to possession by Apollo, put themselves into a drugged state which induced the prophetic process and brought the oracle (see ORACLES).

The Hebrew nabhi, if true to his calling, did not seek answers to questions by any similar art. He might make himself receptive by prayer or fasting, but he could not compel the Lord. It was the Holy Spirit that came, or did not come, with an imperiousness beyond the prophet's control. The prophet might deceive others, and himself, into thinking the Spirit was upon him when it was not – as in the remarkable story of Ahab and the battle of Ramoth-Gilead (1 Kings, chapter 22) – but he never pretended that his message was extracted from God by some technique of his own.

The sounder parallels with the Israelite tradition are to be found in the realm of ecstatic religion. There is an account of a Canaanite fanatic becoming possessed by a god, about 1100 BC, chronologically between Moses and Saul. Closer still to the nabhi excitement, and better documented, is the frenzy accompanying the cult of Dionysus (see DIONYSUS). But while the outward symptoms may have been much the same everywhere, Hebrew prophecy had a unique capacity for growth and enrichment. Yahweh was more than Dionysus. To faithful Israelites he was not merely a god but supreme, the only higher power that mattered, at least to them; and his cult had an ethical content, both for the community and for the individual. The nabhi experience could and did mature, over the centuries, into a solemn disclosure of the divine will through inspired speakers.

Its Greek counterpart passed from the fiery Dionysiac phase into Orphic mysticism (see ORPHEUS). Hebrew prophecy went on growing as a phenomenon in its own right, even after it transcended its nabhi origins. In the end it transformed Israel's religion without losing its identity.

So profound were its effects that some scholars have claimed what is certainly too much. They have contended that the later, literary prophets – Isaiah and the rest – actually invented Israel's religion, and that Old Testament history is largely fiction, concocted to give a pedigree to their teachings. This theory is now out of favour for several reasons, but chiefly because of what the history says, and the tone which the prophets take.

We get a picture, first, of a priestly cult of Yahweh as the God who rescued his people from Egyptian bondage and settled them in the Promised Land. The nabhi prophets have only a subsidiary role. Then, after many years, come the literary prophets. They do not speak like innovators founding a new religion; they appeal to a pure ancestral faith, which they say has been corrupted by monarchy, material wealth, a court priesthood and flirtation with paganism. The priestly-political tradition and the prophetic tradition are two aspects of the same religion. It is incredible that either party would have invented the other in just this way. But having recognized the fact, we should also recognize that it was the prophets, rather than the priests, who gave Israel's faith its eventual grandeur and permanency.

The Prophetic Succession

Between the nabhi and the authors of the later Old Testament books stands the transitional figure of Elijah. He denounced paganism and tyranny in the northern Israelite kingdom under Ahab (875–853 BC). A memorable event in this prophet's career is a visit to Mount Horeb in Sinai, where Moses had received Yahweh's commandments. Elijah witnesses much the same portents – wind, earthquake, fire – but 'the Lord was not in' them. The Lord speaks to him in a 'still small voice'. Here Israel's religion is moving toward a new spiritual level.

Elijah left no writings, apart from a doubtful fragment preserved in 2 Chronicles 21.12–15. About 760 BC, however, literary prophets began to be active, in a succession that went on for centuries and has had no parallel in any other religion. Even these were speakers rather than authors: they harangued crowds, recited verses and told stories in public, underlining them with symbolic gestures, such as smashing a pot in token of a city's ruin. But some of their doings and utterances were set down on sheets of papyrus, either by themselves or by their disciples. The sheets were glued side by side to form a continuous roll; these rolls are the books of the prophets, as we have them in the Bible after many transcriptions.

The literary prophets were still men on whom the Spirit breathed as it had on the nabhi. Habakkuk seems to have regarded himself as a nabhi still, and to have made himself receptive with conscious purpose (Habakkuk 2.1). But in both respects he was unusual. Generally, ideas and images surged unbidden into the prophet's mind; visions forced themselves on him, in sleep or waking; and now, instead of pouring them out in a raw state, he reflected on them and gave them poetic form.

The most important literary prophets fall into two groups. The first quartet comprises Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah. Amos was a shepherd and labourer. His

Ideas and images surged unbidden into the prophet's mind; visions forced themselves on him, in sleep or waking

book of divine messages is notable as the earliest known left-wing manifesto. It denounces the complacent nobles of Israel, and foretells a 'day of the Lord' which will bring retribution on an unjust society. Hosea attacks religious corruption. Isaiah and Micah scan a broader horizon, seeing the Lord as ruler over other nations besides Israel, and foreshadowing a world-wide peace when he will be worshipped by all mankind, if his chosen will only be faithful.

A second quartet of prophets arose in the late 7th century, after the northern Israelite kingdom had been destroyed by Assyria. These were Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Jeremiah. Jeremiah, the most important, was a priest; there was no inevitable clash between the two callings. He speaks darkly of the sins of Jerusalem and its impending fall. However, he looks farther ahead to a restoration and a 'new covenant', which the Lord will write upon the hearts of his people.

Jeremiah, in fact, envisaged a future when the purified religion of Israel would develop into something greater and nobler. So did the unknown author of the mistakenly attached portion of the book of Isaiah which begins at the 40th chapter. This 'Second Isaiah' prophesied in Babylon during the Jews' captivity. He hails their deliverer in the person of Cyrus the Great, who will conquer Babylon and let the captives go home. He calls Cyrus the Lord's Anointed, or Messiah. By launching that momentous theme, and predicting a universal reign of righteousness under the One God of all mankind, the Second Isaiah takes a further step toward the expansion of Israel's faith into a world religion. So, in another way, does the book of Jonah, which depicts that prophet bearing God's word to the Gentiles of Nineveh (see JONAH).

Ezekiel, like the Second Isaiah, belongs to the Babylonian exile. He is the least spontaneous of the prophets, the nearest to being a composer of planned essays. His book closes with a description of a Utopia (see EZEKIEL). Afterwards come a few post-exilic prophets who add little. Judaism regards prophecy as ending with the Old Testament canon.

Hints of the Future

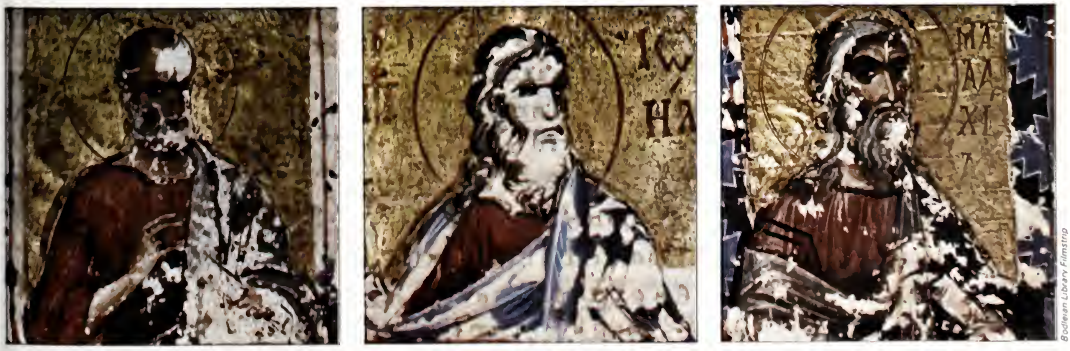
It will be noticed that while the prophets' main objects were to teach, warn and encourage, they did foreshadow future events: hence the notion of prophecy as prediction. But the divinely revealed hints at the future are never the whole message. Some, moreover, are conditional and not absolute: 'If you do this, such and such will happen,' not simply 'Such and such will happen.'

Yet with every allowance made, the predictions raise difficulties for their religious interpreters. If inspired, they must be right. But how should they be construed? On a literal reading, some have been fulfilled (the repeated promise of Israel's return to Palestine, very impressively indeed); but several of the more grandiose have not. There is, for instance, no sight of the prophets' Golden Age.

Here Christians and Jews part company. The orthodox Jewish view is that the Golden Age and similar consummations still lie ahead. They will come with the Messiah. Christians have sought to gather the prophetic loose ends together by applying them to Christ and the Church. Often the application is figurative, but not always. The gospel of Matthew insists on Jesus's literal fulfilment of various cryptic texts in the prophets, from his birth at Bethlehem onward.

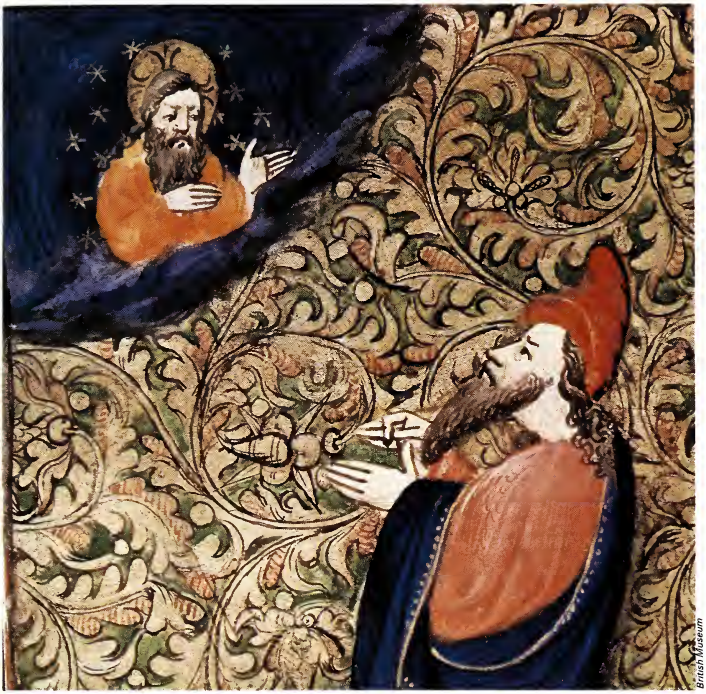
Many of the Christian interpretations involve a species of hindsight. In the light of Christ the prophetic text may seem to make sense, and sometimes it manifestly does. Yet a person reading the text beforehand would seldom have been able to predict the fulfilment. The strongest argument for the Christian view is probably Isaiah, chapter 53, which describes a suffering 'servant of the Lord' in terms that fit no historical person but Jesus. An episode in the Acts of the Apostles (8.27–35) shows how strangely readers were driven to speculate about this passage in Jesus's time, and how quick the Christians were to apply it.

Christianity counts John the Baptist as



The book of Jonah reflects concern with the expansion of the Jewish faith, and depicts the prophet *(left)* carrying God's word to the Gentiles of Nineveh. Joel *(centre)*, one of the 'minor' prophets, wrote after the return from the Exile, as did Malachi *(right)*, the last of the Old Testament prophets

Bodleian Library Filmstrip



British Museum

Habakkuk receives the word of the Lord: from a 14th century manuscript. The Old Testament prophet was a man whom God inspired: he would keep himself in readiness to receive God's message, but did not attempt to obtain it by any art of divination

the last prophet of the old dispensation. Christ himself assumes the prophetic role when he foretells the fall of Jerusalem and the Temple. His words raise the same problem as the other unfulfilled prophecies, because they suggest that the world will end when the Temple falls, or soon after, and that some of his contemporaries will live to witness both events. The Temple fell in 70 AD, but the world did not end. One explanation is that Jesus was simply wrong. Another is that he spoke of the nearer event as a type or symbol of the more distant, and his sayings on the two topics have not been clearly enough distinguished. Another is that the prophecy was conditional like Jonah's, and the condition, whatever it was, has been left out of the gospels.

Christianity pursues the prophetic theme in the story of Pentecost (Acts, chapter 2), when the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples. Official Christian prophecy ends with the Apocalypse, the last New Testament book.

Has valid prophecy occurred since? Jews deny this. Roman Catholicism asserts, as a matter of faith, that the Holy Spirit abides in the Church, preserving it from error but never adding to the content of revelation. The main Protestant bodies have taken the same stand, often more firmly.

Nevertheless, several extremists of the Reformation period claimed to be, in effect, prophets; and the term has since been applied occasionally to leaders of sects. The Mormon Church refers to its founder as 'the Prophet Joseph Smith', on the ground that he was a vessel of special revelations. Roman Catholic theologians have argued that such events as visions of the Blessed Virgin are Christian equivalents of the pre-Christian prophetic experience. Mary's appearances at Fatima in Portugal in 1917 are said to have been accompanied by predictions of future happenings.

The Prophet of Islam

Islam, the third great religion with Old Testament antecedents, places prophecy at the heart of its scheme. Mohammed (see MOHAMMED) was and is *the* Prophet. Rejecting both Jewish legalism and the divinity of Christ, he declared that prophets were the only true teachers. His mission was to restate and perfect the teachings transmitted from Allah by five predecessors – Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus – all of whom had been misconstrued. The Koran, supposedly dictated to him by the angel Gabriel, is frequently spoken of as the Islamic Bible; in fact it is more like a single prophetic book of the Old Testament. While no Moslem can ever supersede Mohammed, Islam has allowed a kind of prophecy to continue, in such cults as Sufism (see SUFIS). The predictive element has always been less conspicuous than in Judaism and Christianity.

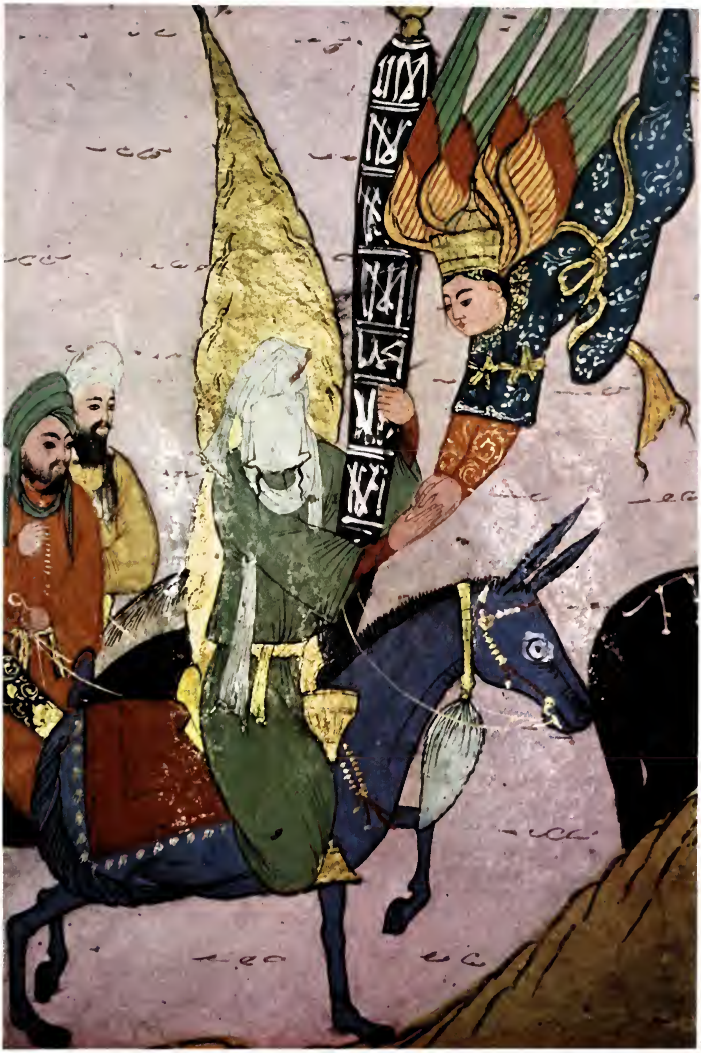
In other religious contexts it is doubtful whether the word 'prophecy' should ever be used. There are no close parallels to the Jewish literary genre. As for the more primitive excitements that are reminiscent of the nabhi, these are better discussed in terms of 'ecstasy' or 'possession'.

Can any safe conclusion be drawn about the prophetic experience? Visions, voices and so on can doubtless be explained away, but does the explanation dispose of the message? Bertrand Russell once alleged that we can draw no objective distinction between a man who eats too little and sees heaven, and a man who drinks too much and sees snakes. However, such dismissals cannot be final, because prophecy never took place in isolation. It was a factor in the life of Israel, or the Church, or the Moslem community. The depth and durability of the prophets' insights, the effects on history, are a matter of record. The alcoholic does nothing comparable with his delusions.

Nor does Russell refute the one modern genius who professed to be a prophet himself and, in some sense, demonstrably was: William Blake (see BLAKE). It is thought that Blake's visions and revelations may have come to him in a hypnagogic state, between sleeping and waking. But the prophetic books which he based on them are not mere 'automatic writing'. They are highly-wrought works of unique literary stature, profound and far ahead of their time. As with Blake, so with Isaiah or Ezekiel. Wherever the experience came from, the resulting work cannot be exorcised by pseudo-scientific incantations about mental unbalance or physical disorder. The prophet may have been subject to either or both. Even so, he still has a secret that escapes his critic.

Colloquial use of the word 'prophecy' to mean 'prediction' raises the question whether people who profess to foretell the future should ever be called prophets because of that alone. As in antiquity, so today, the practitioners of such arts as astrology and dream interpreting cannot normally qualify. Seeking knowledge through a technique is a different thing from being invaded by divine inspiration. Still less should the term 'prophet' be attached to racing tipsters, pollsters or forecasters of economic trends.

One query does persist. There are cases where a person who seems to be simply a fortune teller like other fortune tellers is strikingly more successful than most. The classic historical instance is the astrologer Nostradamus (see NOSTRADAMUS). When



The angel Gabriel is said to have brought the text of the Koran, which is frequently spoken of as the Islamic Bible. In fact it is much more like a single, prophetic book of the Old Testament

Sonia Halliday

all wild claims have been discounted, it remains true that a handful of his bizarre quatrains scored astonishing hits. The American crystal-gazer Jeane Dixon, whose forecasts are a regular feature in the United States press, is a modern counterpart. In such cases we may be tempted to feel that the technique is merely superficial, and the soothsayer has been touched by more mysterious influences.

The final judgement should turn, perhaps, on the nature of the messages. Where they carry a spiritual or moral charge, it should seriously be considered whether something like Hebrew prophecy is occurring again. With Nostradamus that element is slight. Jeane Dixon, on the other hand, has made predictions about the future of religion, including the rise of a new messianic figure born in February 1962. It is noteworthy that although she is a devout Catholic, she concurs with two other Catholic seers in expecting an early end to the papacy as we know it. Such a forecast, against the forecaster's presumed beliefs, certainly suggests an idea forcing its way in from outside the conscious self.

Multiple Time

Few attempts have been made to explain prophecy scientifically, except in the sense of explaining it away. The Holy Spirit's visitations are explained in psychological terms; the predictions are swept aside as guesswork, wishful thinking or, when correct, as forged after the event. Among rationalists who have admitted that knowledge, including knowledge of the future, may indeed come from 'beyond', the best known is J. W. Dunne, author of *An Experiment with Time* (1927).

Dunne had noticed that stray images entering his mind – either in dreams or in passive receptivity – fitted into experiences which he underwent later, yet could not have foreseen. He persuaded 22 experimental subjects to write down their dreams immediately on waking, and watch for fulfilments within a limited time. Several produced images and motifs, some highly unlikely, which figured later in their waking experience. None was associated with any important message or meaning. Still it might fairly be urged that some features of biblical prophecy were being reproduced.

Dunne proposed a theory of multiple time. The human mind stretches away back from ordinary consciousness into an inner self that can observe other temporal dimensions. This sometimes pushes through into the conscious ego with glimpses of what that ego may eventually see for itself, but has not seen yet, because it has not reached that point on its own time-track. The deeper self is immortal and might, one gathers, look indefinitely far ahead.

Possibly the main interest of Dunne is that while he sets up a kind of unconscious in place of God, he concedes that this unconscious must be more than psychoanalysts recognize. If it is to fill its ambitious role, it must have its own methods of cognition. Much the same view has been advanced, as the logical conclusion of Jung's system, by the Catholic psychologist Victor White. In any impartial study of prophecy, the most fruitful approach may well be to say: 'Yes, I agree with any Freudian or Jungian that these things come from the unconscious. But how did they get there in the first place?'

(See also DIVINATION; EXTRA-SENSORY PERCEPTION; and related articles.)

GEOFFREY ASHE

FURTHER READING: D. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Eerdmans, 1983); J. Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Westminster, 1983); John Alden Williams ed, *Islam* (Prentice-Hall, N.J., 1961); Mona Wilson, *The Life of William Blake* (Oxford, 1950).

PROSTITUTION

THE GREEK author Herodotus, writing in the 5th century BC, says that there was in Babylon a great temple with a sumptuous couch, on which no one spent the night except one woman; she had been chosen by the god himself, who visited her there. Remarking on a similar practice in Egypt, he goes on to state that these women were forbidden intercourse with men. Even allowing for Herodotus's often uncritical reporting of local tradition, there is clear reference to such a practice in ancient Mesopotamia in documents dating from the second millennium BC. The passage in Herodotus refers to the voluntary self-dedication of women, who surrendered themselves in the sexual act to a representative of the god, either the king in his sacral function or a priest. This represented a dedication of the procreative powers in the community and its flocks and fields, in which its efforts were promoted by the engagement of the god in the same enterprise. To state it from another angle, the king, as the executive of the Divine King, was the channel of material blessings, of which his procreative powers were a guarantee; and opportunity was provided on a solemn occasion at the most important seasonal crisis of the agricultural year, when he ritually joined with a specially dedicated woman. This woman represented the mother goddess, and on that account held priestly office.

Such a woman was known among the Sumerians and Semites in Mesopotamia as *entu*, and she is known to have held office at Ur at least for the whole of her sexual life, conventionally 40 years. (This suggests an analogy with the 30 years during which the Vestal Virgins at Rome were not allowed to marry.) Texts from Mesopotamia imply that intercourse with any other man than the representative of the god was prohibited. This probably refers to the period of the entu's dedication, since legal texts from Hammurabi's time (c 1700 BC) show that marriage with an entu was possible. This might be desirable despite the age of the entu when she was free for marriage, since these women were of the highest class, including even kings' daughters. What happened to children of the 'sacred marriage' is uncertain. They may have been adopted. The great king Sargon of Akkad was the son of an entu and was exposed in the river like Moses, which may suggest that his mother had broken her vow by intercourse outside her strict temple duty.

A lower class of votaress in Mesopotamia was the *naditu*. She might be married, but since the texts do not mention children of such women, they either became celibate after marriage or married after completing their temple service, which may have lasted the length of their mature sexual life.

Herodotus also states that every woman in ancient Babylon had once in her life to

The goddess of love is shown at a window as a sacred prostitute, in this Phoenician ivory of the 8th century BC

British Museum C. M. Dixon

offer herself to whatever male chose her in the temple of Ishtar, the goddess of love (see ISHTAR). The man who chose her threw into her lap a silver coin with an invocation to the goddess by her title 'Mylitta' (Herodotus's rendering of the Akkadian *mu'allitu*, 'she who brings to birth'). The piece of silver was made over to the temple as a consecrated offering, which recalls the prohibition in Deuteronomy 23.18 against bringing the hire of a prostitute into the sanctuary of God.

Goddess and Harlot

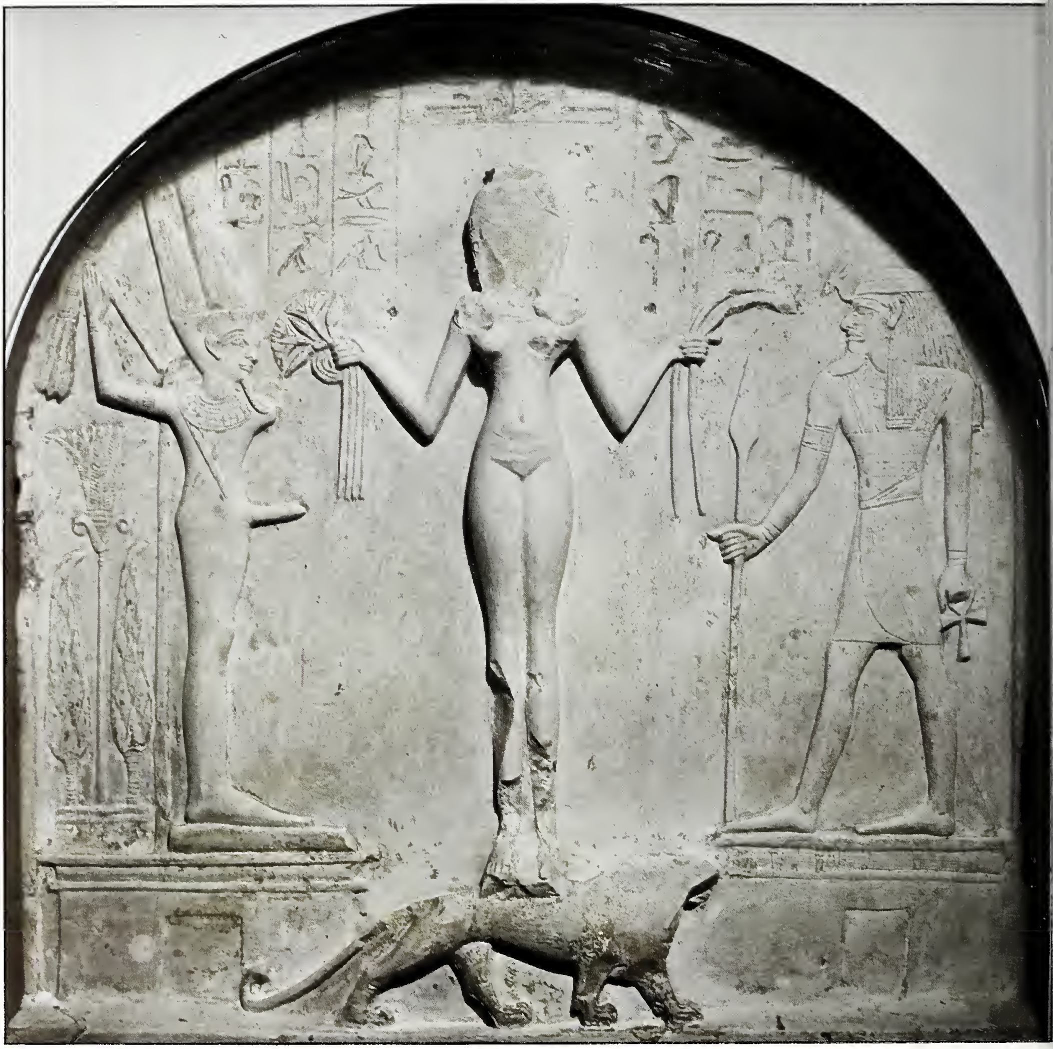
This passage is one of a number of protests in the Old Testament against prostitution, either secular or ritual, to which apparently women in Canaan subjected themselves by special vow. They would make themselves available for longer or shorter periods for sexual intercourse, not with the dedicated representatives of the gods, but with the worshippers. They are known from Mesopotamia and Canaan, and from the Old Testament where they are called *qedeshoth* (Deuteronomy 23.17).

This is ritual prostitution proper; and though the underlying principle was imitative magic, intended to promote fertility, it was capable of social abuse, as its condemnation by the Hebrew prophets and reformers clearly indicates. The practice is implied in a passage in a hymn to the goddess Ishtar, which describes her as a glorified temple prostitute whom 120 men could not exhaust. The fact that sacral prostitution was open to abuse, passing into secular prostitution, is indicated in the Gilgamesh legend of ancient Mesopotamia, where a *harimtu*, or sacred prostitute, is employed to decoy and subdue Enkidu, the wild man of the steppe. In condemning the Canaanite fertility cult as 'whoredom' the Hebrew prophets, notably Hosea and Ezekiel, inveigh against this aspect of the cult and its gross abuse.

It is uncertain whether prostitution in the cult was only practised as a rite of imitative magic, or whether the prostitutes were also considered to represent the Canaanite goddesses of fertility – Asherah, the mother goddess, Anat the sister and wife of Baal, and the goddess Astarte (see ASTARTE). The former significance of the rite might be suggested by the fact that male prostitutes (*qedeshim*) are mentioned in the Bible. On the other hand, pendants and plaques moulded in clay and metal of one or other of these goddesses in the nude, with breasts and pudenda emphasized, may indicate that the prostitutes were considered as representatives of the goddesses.

In view of the invective of the Hebrew prophets against this aspect of the Canaanite fertility cult, it is remarkable that there is no explicit evidence of the rite in the Ras Shamra texts (cuneiform texts from ancient Ugarit, which provide much of our information about Canaanite religion). However, the word *inst*, mentioned in the texts, may denote temple prostitutes as 'sociable ladies'.

Ritual prostitution on a wide scale, with its abuse, which made it practically licensed promiscuity, was practised in all Nature



Canaanite fertility goddess depicted as a sacred prostitute on an Egyptian stele: she holds a lotus and phallic serpents

cults throughout the Mediterranean, especially in the cult of Aphrodite in Cyprus and in that of Cybele, the Magna Mater of Asia Minor, which was introduced into Rome during the Punic Wars (see APHRODITE; CYBELE). In Cybele's cult and in the related cult of her consort Attis, male perverts and eunuchs played a conspicuous role, the former in rites of ritual prostitution and the latter as those who had in an ecstasy of devotion emasculated themselves in the service of the deity. Ritual prostitution was a feature also of the cult of the Egyptian goddess Isis, in its development as a Mystery religion in Ptolemaic Egypt and in Rome, where it was introduced at the end of the 3rd century BC (see ISIS).

J. GRAY

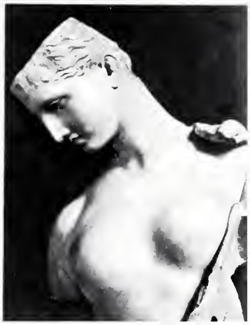
God's Slaves

Sacred prostitutes were common in India till the end of the 19th century, and Benjamin Walker comments, in *Hindu World*, that: 'The ancient temples were for centuries establishments of venery, and the early writers speak of the difficulty of honest pilgrims trying to perform their religious duties because of the shameless blandishments and solicitations of the temple girls. . . . The practice of temple prostitution is said, though on no reliable authority, to be current still. If it exists it is entirely clandestine. The persuasion of Christian missionaries, criticism from European observers, and agitation by Hindu reformers, have put a stop to it.'

The *devadasi*, or 'god's slave', usually began her career as a little girl of seven or eight. She was formally married to the god whose temple she was to serve, and was ritually deflowered by a priest, or by a favoured customer, or by the carved phallus of a god's image. Trained in the sensuous arts and in dancing, the girls were available to worshippers at the temple, their earnings going to the priests, and they and the children who were born to them also helped to clean the temple and assisted at ceremonies. They enjoyed high prestige and were in demand at weddings, where a devadasi's presence was a fortunate omen.

Psi

Greek letter, used in parapsychology to denote 'psychic' abilities or phenomena; clairvoyance, precognition telepathy and psychokinesis are generally regarded as effects of a single, unified ability, called 'psi'. See EXTRA-SENSORY PERCEPTION; PSYCHOKINESIS; SPONTANEOUS PSI EXPERIENCES.



Mansell Collection

Psyche

Greek word for 'breath', used to mean life, soul, spirit or mind, as distinct from body: in classical mythology, a beautiful girl with whom Cupid, the love god, fell in love; she eventually became immortal herself and the lovers were united; the story, told in *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius, was taken as a parable of the union between the human soul and divine love. See EROS.

The modern history of psychical research is a story of the application of great resources of talent and energy to peculiarly puzzling phenomena, and of a gradual shift in educated opinion towards a more open-minded attitude to the 'paranormal'

PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

IT IS NOT EASY TO DEFINE psychical research. The purpose of the Society for Psychical Research (the S.P.R.) is 'to examine without prejudice or prepossession and in a scientific spirit those faculties of man, real or supposed, which appear to be inexplicable on any generally recognised hypothesis.' That psychical research is a 'science' in the sense that most psychical researchers attempt to investigate certain classes of phenomena, real or imaginary, 'without prejudice or prepossession' may indeed be granted; though it must be borne in mind that some of the groups which have called themselves societies for psychical research are in effect Spiritualist organizations.

Problems arise when one attempts to demarcate the alleged 'faculties of man' which constitute the special subject matter of psychical research. They cannot be just those faculties which are 'inexplicable on any generally recognised hypothesis', because most human faculties are far from properly understood, and psychologists diverge as to how they should be explained.

Are they then faculties whose existence, rather than whose explanation, is in doubt? If that were so then, to the extent that the phenomena investigated were satisfactorily demonstrated, the subject itself would disappear. Furthermore, psychical research would include topics that are generally held to lie outside its scope (such as the question of whether or not human beings may be sensitive to the direction of the earth's magnetic poles).

Could it be simply a historical accident that certain alleged 'faculties of man' are commonly held to constitute the subject matter of psychical research, while others are excluded? A case could be made out on these lines. The immediate ancestry of modern psychical research is to be found in certain aspects of the mesmeric and Spiritualist movements which spread across Europe and America during the early and middle 19th century (see MESMERISM; SPIRITUALISM). Some of the early mesmerists believed that mesmeric subjects might exhibit, not merely heightened faculties and heightened responsiveness to the commands of the operator, but faculties which seemed to be almost unknown in unmesmerized persons. Accounts of thought transference, of clairvoyance and 'eyeless vision', of clairvoyant diagnosis and mesmeric cure of ailments, and of hypnosis at a distance, were in circulation quite early in the history of French and German mesmerism – in fact before the end of the 18th century. In the first part of the 19th century accounts of some of these kinds of phenomena became commoner on the Continent; and in the 1830s and 1840s the mesmeric movement, and with it alleged instances of such phenomena, spread to the United States and Great Britain.

The mesmeric movement paved the way for the Spiritualist movement of the second half of the 19th century. It accustomed the public to the idea that certain especially gifted persons might, when in a state of trance, exercise clairvoyant and other paranormal faculties, and even to the idea that some mesmeric subjects might become aware of, and perhaps communicate with, the spirits of departed persons. The mesmeric trance developed, by an easy and natural transition, into the mediumistic trance, in which the medium's 'interior vision' might have imposed upon it scenes and personalities from the next world; and the rapport which was thought to exist between mesmerist and subject provided an analogy for the process by which departed spirits were thought to control the hand or vocal apparatus of a medium. A public which had digested the leading ideas of mesmerism had little difficulty in assimilating the beliefs of Spiritualists.

There can be little doubt that the central body of material commonly studied by psychical researchers comprises those seemingly novel faculties which were apparently revealed by the experiments of mesmerists, plus the developments of, and superadditions to, those alleged faculties which took place in the context of the modern Spiritualist movement. The first 'psychical researchers' were in effect those persons who first attempted a dispassionate examination of these supposed faculties. One might mention, in particular, Sir William Crookes (1832–1919), whose *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism* (1874) described his instrumental recordings of the phenomena produced by D. D. Home and other physical mediums (see CROOKES; HOME).

Although it seems quite possible that the supposed paranormal faculties and phenomena which constitute the subject matter of psychical research have been grouped together largely for historical reasons, it could none the less be argued that, whatever the reasons for associating the phenomena, many of them do in fact together form a unitary class – a class to which similar laws and similar kinds of explanation will ultimately be found to apply. Whether psychical research can be marked out as a distinct branch of inquiry, or as a distinct branch of psychology, on grounds such as these, only time and sustained investigation will show; and the time required is not likely to be short, or the investigation simple.

Founders of the S.P.R.

The history of modern psychical research can be roughly divided into three periods: from 1882 to 1914; from 1914 to 1945; and from 1945 to the present day. A great impetus was given to psychical research by the foundation, in 1882, of the Society for Psychical Research. Prominent amongst the founders and early members were Sir William Barrett (1844-1925), professor of physics at the University College of Dublin; Henry Sidgwick (1838-1900), professor of moral philosophy at Cambridge; his wife Eleanor (1845-1936), later principal of Newnham College, Cambridge; F. W. H. Myers (1843-1901), a noted poet, essayist and classical scholar (see MYERS); Edmund Gurney (1847-1888), a keen student of psychology and philosophy (see GURNEY); Richard Hodgson (1855-1905), Australian by birth and one of Sidgwick's pupils; Walter Leaf (1852-1927), eminent both as a banker and a classical scholar; Frank Podmore (1856-1910), the historian of the Spiritualist movement, and a man of keenly sceptical mind; and Sir Oliver Lodge (1851-1940), a well-known physicist, professor of

J. Cutten

The early members of the Society for Psychical Research, founded in 1882, included many eminent men of academic distinction *Above* Sir William Barrett, professor of physics at University College, Dublin, and a leading investigator of poltergeist phenomena *Right* Sir Oliver Lodge, professor of physics at Liverpool University, with his wife: he carried out a set of experiments on the telepathic communication of drawings *Opposite page* Henry Sidgwick (*left*) was a professor of moral philosophy at Cambridge: he and F.W.H.Myers (*centre*) supposedly sent messages from beyond the grave which were validated by a system of 'cross-correspondences'. The Australian Richard Hodgson (*right*), a pupil of Sidgwick, made a detailed study of the noted trance medium, Mrs Leonora Piper

physics at Liverpool University.

A number of these people, and their associates, most of them religious by upbringing, were of the opinion that recent scientific developments had not merely undermined orthodox religion, but were in danger of rendering any form of religious belief impossible. They felt there was just a chance that they could meet science with science, and by conducting strictly scientific inquiries into the more puzzling phenomena of mesmerism and Spiritualism, achieve not, perhaps, new religious insights, but at any rate the overthrow of the 'materialist synthesis' which had seemed imminent during the 1870s. To that end they gave unsparingly of their time and money and of their very considerable abilities; and within 20 years a great many data had been collected and the main outlines and the main problems of modern psychical research had become clear.

A comparable society was founded in the United States, following a tour of that country in 1884 by Sir William Barrett. Its first president was Professor Simon Newcomb, the astronomer, and its leading early light was Professor William James, the philosopher and psychologist.

For the spectacular physical phenomena associated with Spiritualist mediumship (see MEDIUMS), the S.P.R. found at first little evidence, indeed, certain investigations whose results the S.P.R. published seemed, by revealing the extent to which even honest and intelligent persons could be misled by deliberate conjuring, to cast doubt on the reality of any of the alleged physical phenomena. In 1886 S. J. Davey, a member of the S.P.R. who was a skilled amateur conjuror, was introduced as a medium by Richard Hodgson, and succeeded in reproducing many of the feats of William Eglinton, one of the better-known physical mediums of the time. It was not until the year 1908 that the S.P.R. was able to obtain evidence for 'physical phenomena' under anything like satisfactory conditions. Three of its most experienced members, Hon Everard Feilding, Hereward Carrington and W. W. Baggally, had a series of sittings at Naples with a well-known Neapolitan medium, Eusapia Palladino (see PALLADINO). Eusapia had been detected in fraud by the three investigators; none the less, she many times produced for them seemingly inexplicable movements of objects, and materializations of hands, in fair light and under apparently satisfactory conditions of control.

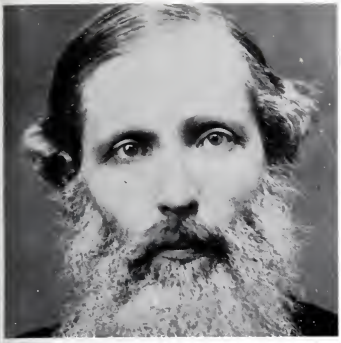
Reports were also received, and investigations conducted, of a number of poltergeist cases (see POLTERGEISTS). The principal investigators of these cases were Sir William Barrett, who came to believe in the genuineness of some of the phenomena, and Frank Podmore, who concluded that fraud was probably always responsible.

The most striking experimental results published by the S.P.R. in its early years were probably those obtained in certain experiments on telepathy. The design of many of these experiments would not nowadays be considered satisfactory; none the less some of the results remain puzzling. Particularly curious were various experiments on the telepathic transmission of drawings conducted during the 1880s by Mr Malcolm Guthrie and Sir Oliver Lodge. In these experiments the transmission took place only over a short distance; but in the Miles-Ramsden experiments of 1906-8, the percipients were sometimes separated by many miles.

Case Histories on Ghosts

Soon after the foundation of the S.P.R., various of its members initiated a systematic and successful attempt to collect first-hand testimonies from persons who had seen apparitions. A considerable amount of testimony was obtained, and examples were found of 'haunting' apparitions, of collectively perceived apparitions and of apparitions of the dead. By far the largest body of testimony, however, concerned 'crisis' cases, that is, apparitions which coincided in time with some crisis in the affairs of the persons they resembled, and in 1886 a two-volume survey of crisis cases and related material was published by Gurney, Myers and Podmore under the title of *Phantasms of the Living*.

Gurney was the principal author, and he took the view that crisis apparitions are telepathically initiated hallucinations. In many instances the figures seen contained details which, Gurney felt, must have come from the mind of the percipient, strongly suggesting that the figures were in some sense 'constructed' by the percipients, that is, were hallucinations. The coincidences



J. Cutten

Radio Times Hulton Picture Library

J. Cutten

between the hallucinations and the deaths of the persons whom they represent may be accounted for by supposing that at some level of their personalities the percipients become aware of the crisis telepathically, and 'externalize' this knowledge in the form of a hallucination. Gurney held that this possibility was supported by the evidence for telepathy which had already been obtained both from actual experiments and from accounts of its spontaneous occurrence in everyday life (see SPONTANEOUS PSI EXPERIENCES).

The Common Hallucination

Edmund Gurney died in 1888, but his work on crisis apparitions was continued in the so-called 'Census of Hallucinations', the Report on which was published in the *Proceedings* of the S.P.R. for 1894. One of the principal aims of the census was to determine whether or not the coincidences between apparitions and deaths which marked the numerous recorded crisis cases could be set down to chance; whether, in other words, it might be that people who had hallucinations tended to forget or remain silent about their experiences except in those very rare cases where the hallucination chanced to coincide with the death of the person it resembled. Answers to a questionnaire on hallucinations put to 17,000 persons revealed that hallucinations are commoner among sane persons than might have been supposed (about one person in ten is likely to have had one), but also strongly suggested that the number of reported death coincidences could not be ascribed to chance.

The most interesting single case which was investigated in the early days of psychical research was undoubtedly that of the American trance medium, Mrs Leonora Piper (see PIPER). Mrs Piper came to the notice of psychical researchers in the year 1885 through the agency of William James, and she was intensively investigated for a good part of the next 30 years. Most of those who seriously investigated her mediumship became convinced that she possessed paranormal powers, and some (including Richard Hodgson, who had studied the case in great detail) that the 'communicators' who purported to speak or write through her organism were indeed the spirits of deceased human beings.

The most curious development in this, or perhaps any, period of the history of psychical research, however, was not the Piper case (though Mrs Piper played a part in it) but the series of automatic writings known as the 'cross-correspondences'. The early leaders of the S.P.R. all died relatively early – Gurney, aged 41, in 1888; Sidgwick, aged 61, in 1900; and Myers, aged 57, in 1901. Shortly after the death of Myers there began to emerge through various automatists a series of interlinked communications purportedly coming from Myers and various of his deceased friends. These, known as cross-correspondences, had ostensibly been constructed by these deceased persons as a means of proving their own survival (see CROSS-CORRESPONDENCES).

Before he died, F. W. H. Myers had almost completed a large-scale survey of the whole field of psychical research. It was published in 1903, under the title *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*. In addition to presenting a mass of factual evidence, Myers developed a unifying theoretical framework which has had a good deal of influence. He suggested that a man's everyday stream of consciousness is only one of perhaps several streams of consciousness which may be connected with his organism. Many of the phenomena of ordinary life and of psychopathology – for instance, dreams, hypnosis, and hysterical tics and anaesthesias – are to be understood as manifestations of these submerged or 'subliminal' streams of consciousness. Telepathy and other supernormal faculties are commonly to be found exhibited in dreams and hypnosis and even in certain hysterical states; and in Myers's view this suggests that the subliminal consciousness possesses powers which the ordinary waking consciousness does not.

Such phenomena as crisis apparitions or automatic writing embodying supernormal knowledge may then be understood as the means by which the subliminal consciousness may pass information in its possession to the ordinary, waking consciousness, when the latter would otherwise remain ignorant of it.

Myers's studies in psychopathology brought him into contact with many leading psychologists, English, American and European; and by the first decade of the 20th century a number of them were seriously interested in psychical research. In the United States there was William James; in Austria, Freud; in France, Janet and Bernheim; in Switzerland, Jung and Flournoy; in England, G. F. Stout and William McDougall. The contemptuous hostility with which a large part of the academic and scientific worlds had greeted the inception of psychical research had to some extent been blunted by the persistence and the care and candour with which the early psychical researchers had set about their task. It seemed not altogether impossible that before long psychical research would become a generally accepted branch of scientific endeavour.

Between the Wars

The First World War did not bring about any sudden break or change of direction in psychical research. The most influential figure on the English scene remained Mrs E. M. Sidgwick, widow of Professor Henry Sidgwick. Together with her brother, G.W. Balfour, and her S.P.R. colleagues J.G. Piddington and Miss Alice Johnson, she devoted much of her time to supervising the collection and analysis of a growing mass of cross-correspondence scripts. She also studied certain aspects of the mediumship of Mrs Gladys Osborne Leonard (see LEONARD), perhaps the most remarkable mental medium of all time.

Mrs Leonard's mediumship possessed a number of unusual features, in addition to the sheer quantity of impressive material which it provided. There were the celebrated 'book tests', in which her 'control' Feda showed an apparent ability to read designated pages and lines in books not ordinarily accessible to the medium; there were also her successful 'proxy' sittings, in which the sitter obtained messages on behalf of an absent third party of whose concerns he was himself largely ignorant; and there was her 'direct voice' – a voice apparently not emanating from her own vocal apparatus, which sometimes joined briefly in the conversation under circumstances which made imposture unlikely.

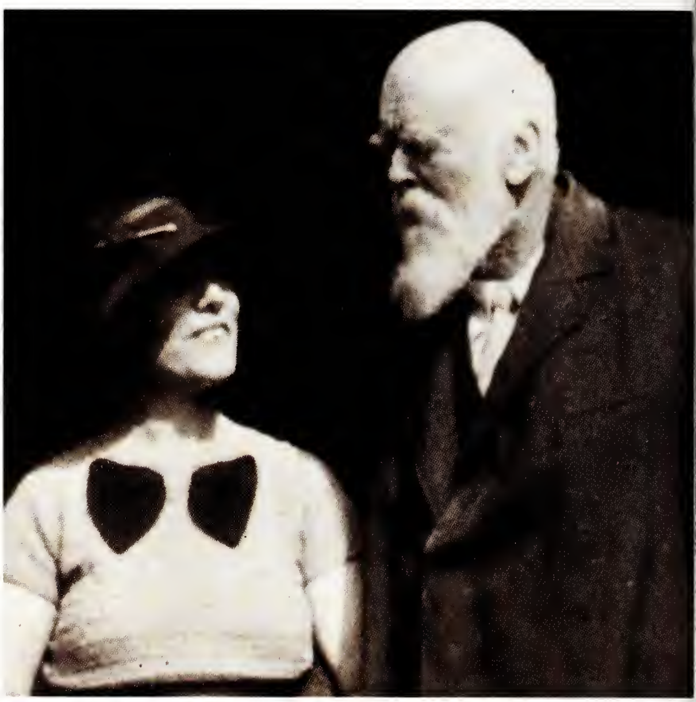
In the United States the central figure of the 1920s was Margery Crandon, wife of a Boston surgeon. Around the physical phenomena of her mediumship there grew up controversies which deeply divided the American S.P.R., and led to the establishment of a separate organization, the Boston S.P.R., under the leadership of Dr Walter Franklin Prince. Prince's own studies of the Doris Fischer case of multiple personality and of the automatic writings of Mrs J. H. Curran (*The Case of Patience Worth*, 1923) remain among the classics of psi research.

A Telepathic Rationalist

Many of the investigations and controversies of the 1920s and the 1930s centred round alleged cases of physical mediumship. Serious investigations of these phenomena were more numerous then than at any other period before or since. Besides Margery Crandon, there was 'Eva C.', who had been investigated before the war by Charles Richet, the French physiologist, and was studied again by Dr Gustave Geley, by members of the S.P.R., and by a committee of the Sorbonne. Franek Kluski, a Polish professional man, was studied by Geley, who claimed startling results. None of these mediums won anything like universal confidence from those who investigated them. Perhaps the most interesting physical mediums of the period were two Austrians, Willi and Rudi Schneider, and especially the latter (see SCHNEIDER BROTHERS). Rudi was studied in England by Harry Price, a controversial figure who ran his own National Laboratory for Psychical Research in London, and by various members of the S.P.R., including Lord Rayleigh, the famous physicist. He was able to produce a variety of minor physical effects under seemingly stringent conditions of control – manual, electrical and infra-red.

In the study of apparitions, little progress was made, the two outstanding studies being Mrs Sidgwick's *Phantasms of the Living*, published in the *Proceedings* of the S.P.R. for 1923, and G. N. M. Tyrrell's *Apparitions* (1943), a theoretical discussion. Experiments on telepathy and clairvoyance were at first not numerous; the most interesting of them were perhaps those in which Gilbert Murray, the noted Hellenist, acted as percipient, reports of which were published in the *Proceedings* of the S.P.R. for 1918 and 1924 and in the *Journal* for 1941. Although a lifelong rationalist, Professor Murray showed a very curious ability to pick up impressions of scenes, drawn either from fiction or from real life, which groups of his friends concentrated on; it was these experiments which finally convinced Freud of the reality of telepathy.

Of note in a somewhat different way are the observations made by E. Osty on a number of 'sensitives' or clairvoyants and published in his *Supernormal Faculties in Man* (1923). Osty's clairvoyants were able to give their sitters correct information not merely about matters known to those sitters, but about matters which, although relevant, were quite unknown to them. Some writers have suggested that the existence of powers of extra-sensory perception so extraordinary as these would, if confirmed, make it plausible to ascribe even the most 'evidential' mediumistic communications to telepathy and clairvoyance on the part of the medium, rather than to the influence of the spirits of deceased human beings.



Above left **Sir Oliver Lodge with Mrs Leonard, the famous medium; Lodge, a distinguished physicist, was one of the first to subject psychic phenomena to critical scientific investigation *Below left* Professor C. E. M. Joad and Harry Price, founder of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research of London, check preparations for the reproduction of a supernatural scene on the Brocken, traditional site of witches' revels *Above* At the National Laboratory, Price prepares to undertake investigations with the American medium Frank Decker *Right* Ectoplasmic 'hand' produced during a seance by Mrs Margery Crandon, an American medium active in the 1920s *Below* Before a seance Pasquale Erto, an Italian medium, is fitted with boxing gloves as a control to prevent his using his fingers**

Harry Price Library London University

Harry Price Library London University

Experiments at Duke

Later in the period work on the problem of extra-sensory perception increased greatly and assumed a form which has remained largely characteristic of it ever since (see EXTRA-SENSORY PERCEPTION). In 1927 William McDougall, a British psychologist, went from Harvard to Duke University at Durham, North Carolina, to establish a department of psychology there. McDougall had been interested in psychical research for many years (he was a member of the S.P.R. Council), and to his laboratory there came a young Harvard biologist, J. B. Rhine, and his wife, Louisa. Rhine set out to apply the ordinary methods of statistical analysis and experimental design to the problems of extra-sensory perception (ESP). He and his collaborators devised the pack of cards commonly called Zener cards. The order of these cards would be randomized, and an 'agent' would then turn them over one by one while a 'percipient' recorded guesses. Most of Rhine's subjects were university students or members of the university staff, and a number of them succeeded in scoring well above the level of chance even under strictly controlled conditions. Occasionally – as in the famous Pearce-Pratt experiments of 1933 in which agent and percipient were in separate buildings 100 yards apart – the odds against chance reached an astronomical level. Rhine's early results were summarized in his book *Extrasensory Perception* (1934).

As a result of these findings, the Parapsychology Laboratory of Duke University was formally constituted. The adoption of the term 'parapsychology' instead of the older 'psychical research' marked the shift to a distinctively laboratory-orientated approach. Rhine and his associates weathered some heavy criticism from statisticians and academic psychologists, and continued to obtain striking results. They also attempted the first statistical investigations of 'physical phenomena'. Here again they made no use of professed mediums; yet above chance results were obtained. Ordinary persons were required to attempt to influence the fall of dice thrown at first by hand and later by mechanical means. To this effect the name of psychokinesis (PK) was given (see PSYCHOKINESIS).

The insistence on laboratory techniques in psychical research between the wars may be seen as a reaction to the fact that academic psychology had become steadily more behaviouristic and more 'scientific' and therefore more hostile to the kind of psychical research which had been predominant during the first quarter of the century. Orthodox psychologists showed themselves if anything less tolerant of psychical researchers than scientists from other fields; no doubt they found it hard enough to win recognition of the scientific status of their own subject, without its being joined to so dubious a yoke-fellow.

Recent Developments

In the period since the Second World War, the centre of activity has shifted away from Great Britain and Europe to the USA, where several important parapsychological institutions have been founded – the Parapsychology Foundation of New York (1952), the Parapsychological Association (1956) and the Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man (1964), successor to the Duke University Laboratories. Parapsychology units were established in various American universities and research institutions, but these have enjoyed somewhat mixed fortunes, and several have been dissolved through lack of funds. In Europe a chair of parapsychology established at the University of Utrecht in 1974 was lost in 1988 during university cut-backs. The Koestler Chair of Parapsychology, established at Edinburgh University in 1985, is currently (1994) the only such chair in Europe. Outside Europe and the US there has been some academic interest in parapsychology in countries as diverse as Brazil, Russia and China, although in the two last-named the terms parapsychology and psychical research are generally avoided.

In recent laboratory-oriented parapsychology (say from the late 1960s onwards), two broad tendencies may be discerned, even though much else has gone on outside them (see EXTRA-SENSORY PERCEPTION; PSYCHOKINESIS). The first, which is shared with psychology in general, is the widespread adoption of electronic technology. Targets are usually presented and guesses recorded by computerized systems, and the randomization of target orders is secured by the use of sub-atomic sources of randomness – 'random event generators' or REGS.

The use of REGS has come especially into its own in PK experimentation. Automated PK experiments incorporating REGS were first pioneered by Dr. Helmut Schmidt in the 1960s, and have since been extensively conducted by Robert Jahn and his associates at Princeton University. Jahn's automated machinery generates ones or zeros at a very rapid rate. The (unselected) subjects aim to increase the frequency of targets of a given category, or to decrease it, or not to interfere with the output of the REG at all, and are given continuous feedback of results. A large number of subjects have carried out a very large number of trials, and, though the deviations from chance have been numerically small, very high levels of significance have been attained.

Not all recent PK experiments have used REGS. In some the targets have been living systems or biological materials: for instance, mice, seedlings, enzymes, yeasts and bacteria. Some significant results have been obtained, and throw light on the apparent successes of certain healers.

The second general tendency has been an increasing reversion to free response ESP experiments, that is to say experiments in which the range of target material, and hence the range of possible guesses, is not restricted to a small number of predetermined categories. Such experiments are perhaps more interesting to take part in than the dry routines of cardguessing. For example, a number of investigators (R. Jahn, R. Targ and H. Puthoff, C. Tart, M. Schlitz) have carried out apparently successful experiments on 'remote viewing'. These are experiments in which subjects (usually 'psychically gifted' individuals) try to pick up images of a locality to which members of the experimental team have gone. Transcripts of the subjects' descriptions are sent to independent judges who rate them for correspondence to a series of sites, one of which was the actual target.

The Ganzfeld

The most celebrated and apparently most successful of modern free-response experiments are those involving the 'ganzfeld' technique. Ganzfeld experiments, which evolved out of the 'dream telepathy' experiments of M. Ullman and his collaborators, are a facet of a revived interest in the subject's state of consciousness as a possible determinant of success in ESP experiments. It is a very old idea that 'inner-directed' states of consciousness may be more conducive to success than 'outer-directed' ones. Ganzfeld situations – situations in which stimulation in all sensory modalities is kept as comfortably even and as undifferentiated as possible – are specially structured to promote a tranquil mental state in subjects, with a copious flow of imagery; then a 'sender' in a separate room tries to influence the flow of imagery in a direction suggested by a target picture or transparency or piece of video film randomly selected from four possible targets. Afterwards the subject is shown the four possible targets, and asked, by an individual who does not know the answer, to guess which was the actual target; or his description of his imagery may be rated by independent judges for correspondences to the targets. Highly significant results have been obtained in such experiments in a number of laboratories, and experiments (modified in the light of criticisms) are still in progress.

The leading exponent of the ganzfeld technique was Charles Honorton (1946-1992), whose final experimental set-up had fully automated randomization and presentation of targets and recording of results.

Turning away from laboratory experiments to the investigation of examples of 'spontaneous' psychical phenomena, there can be no doubt that the most remarkable and most innovative work has been that of Professor Ian Stevenson of the University of Virginia on children who exhibit verified ostensible memories of previous lives (see REINCARNATION). Stevenson's *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (1966; revised edition 1974) opened up what was (to western parapsychologists at least) virtually an unknown field of inquiry, and set new standards in the careful investigation and recording of such cases.

Extensive further studies by Stevenson and his collaborators have produced a large body of published case-reports from which certain overall patterns have emerged and been confirmed – for instance that the memories are usually exhibited as soon as the child can speak, that the 'reincarnated' individuals often met violent deaths in the ostensible previous incarnation, and that the person concerned may exhibit skills and interests, as well as memories, related to the ostensible previous incarnation. The proper interpretation of this body of material remains controversial; but the material itself is decidedly impressive.

Cases of apparitions and poltergeists continue to be reported from time to time. No momentous discoveries have been made in connection with them, but several new lines of approach are being attempted. One is the detailed statistical analysis (made possible only by the use of computers) of large collections of cases in the hope of uncovering recurrent characteristics and relationships. Another is the application, particularly to cases of poltergeists, of the latest surveillance and recording technology, with the aim both of excluding fraud and of learning more about the physical nature of the phenomena. It remains to be seen what light, if any, these new approaches will throw on the peculiar happenings concerned.

ALAN GAULD

FURTHER READING: A. Gauld, *The Founders of Psychical Research* (Schocken, 1968); B. Inglis, *Natural and Supernatural* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1977) and *Science and Parascience* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1984); S.H.Mauskopf and M.R.McVaugh, *The Elusive Science* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); J. Beloff, *Parapsychology: A Concise History* (Athlone Press, 1994).

A flashlight photograph taken during a seance reveals a dark mass of ectoplasm behind the test tubes. After analysis by Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a medical school, its composition was reported as being 'sodium, potassium, water, chlorine, albumen, epithelial cells and fresh red blood corpuscles'

Harry Price Library London University

National Film Archive

Evil spirits, in a still from the film *Witchcraft Through the Ages*: witches were feared for their ability to enlist evil to bring harm upon their victims

Methods of bewitching, enchanting or magically harming an enemy range from the distortion of Christian services to the withering stare of the Evil Eye: many old beliefs about psychic attack have their parallels in modern occult theories

PSYCHIC ATTACK

IN THE YEAR 1455 the nuns of a convent at Wennigsen, near Hanover, who were determined to resist all attempts to reform their order, were visited by a group of officials bent on enforcing reform. After some inconclusive argument, 'the nuns lay down forthwith with one accord flat upon the choir pavement, with arms and legs outstretched in the form of a cross, and chanted at the top of their voices, from beginning to end, the antiphon, *In the midst of life we are in death*.' This demonstration was a good deal more sinister than appears at first sight, for the purpose of the solemnly chanted words was to kill the objectionable visitors.

This method of cursing an enemy had been forbidden long before, by the Synod of Cologne in 1310, but without effect. Words sanctified by use in a Christian context were believed to have acquired an inherent magical force of their own, and an even more drastic way of harnessing pious ritual to the murder of a victim was the saying of Mass for the dead against a living man. Petrus Cantor, Rector of the Cathedral School at Paris in the 12th century, said in his *Verbum Abbreviatum* that the sacrament 'is turned by some to magic arts, men celebrating masses over images of wax as a curse upon others; nay even, for such a curse, they sing the Mass of the faithful (departed) ten times or more, that their enemy may die by the third day or at least within a brief while afterwards, and may be laid with the dead in the grave.'

Besides their activities of Devil-worship, storm-raising and the rest, witches were particularly feared for their power to kill or to inflict serious mental and physical damage on human victims. Fear of a 'psychic attack' of this sort was well-grounded, at least in the sense that people who believe that hostile magic is being directed against them, and who believe that magic works, are likely to suffer mentally and physically as a result (see CURSE). The famous 17th-century work on witchcraft, Guazzo's *Compendium Maleficarum*, gives a list of the typical symptoms of bewitchment. They include loss of appetite, vomiting, pricking pains in the region of the heart, sexual impotence, breaking out in a light sweat at night even in cold weather, pains in the neck, kidneys or belly, and sensations which would nowadays be put down to indigestion. 'The sicknesses with which those who are bewitched suffer,' Guazzo says, 'are generally a wasting or emaciation of the whole body and a loss of strength, together with a deep languor, dullness of mind, various melancholy ravings, different kinds of fever ...certain convulsive movements of an epileptic appearance; a sort of rigidity of the limbs giving the appearance of a fit; sometimes... such a weakness pervades the whole body that they can hardly move on any account at all.'

Also listed are unnatural pallor or yellowness of the skin, and an inability to look a priest in the eye (there was in fact a superstition, resented by Christian writers, that priests were uncanny and unlucky). 'If by chance the witch should come to see the sick man, the patient is at once affected with great uneasiness and seized with terror and trembling. If it is a child, it cries.'

Feathers and Blood

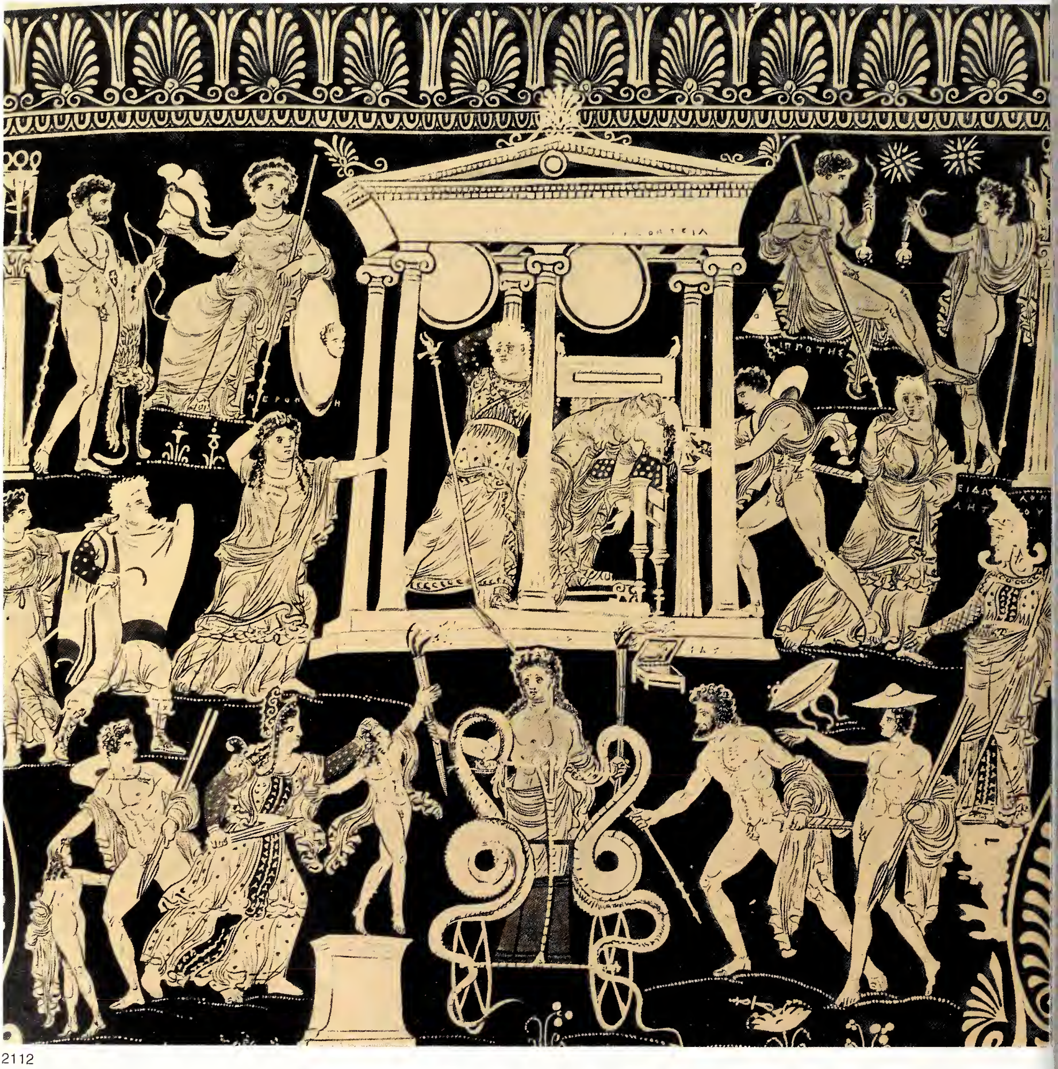
Some of the symptoms listed are those of depression, and the emphasis on psychosomatic complaints is significant, for it is likely that hysterical reactions had much to do with the belief that one was bewitched (see HYSTERICAL POSSESSION). Reviewing the English evidence on the effects of spells cast by witches with the aid of demons, C. L'Estrange Ewen concluded that 'it appears that the infirmities and disorders supposed to be induced by the Devil and his angels, although sometimes described as of weird and unknown character, in general conformed to the bodily and mental manifestations exhibited in recognized derangements, such as insanity, seizures, sterility, paralysis, wasting diseases, or sensorial disorders.'

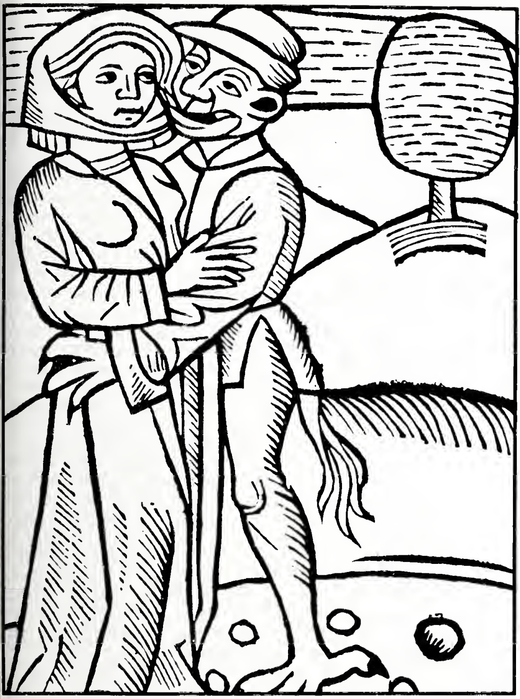
That diseases, physical and mental, are caused by demons, or actually are demons, is a very old and rooted belief. When witches were believed to be in league with the Devil, fear of them was heightened by the conviction that God allowed Satan and his minions considerable latitude to warp the minds and torment the bodies of men. The *Malleus Maleficarum* explains that the Devil can inflict diseases on the body and can take possession of it. He can chain up the reason and disorder the senses. He can create a frantic infatuation of love in the mind and equally a fierce obsession of hatred. A witch can even delude a man into thinking that his penis has been removed (see INVISIBILITY) and, discussing the well-known ability of witches to make people impotent, the *Malleus* characteristically observes that God permits bewitchment 'more in the case of the generative powers, because of their greater corruption, than in the case of other human actions'.

The methods of psychic attack credited to witches generally combine an element of mimicry with the use of an object or process as a focus for concentrating malice. The obvious example is image magic, in which a doll represented the enemy, so that what was done to it was done to him (see IMITATIVE MAGIC). Something which had been in contact with the victim could be used in the same way, and would create the necessary link between the spell and its target.

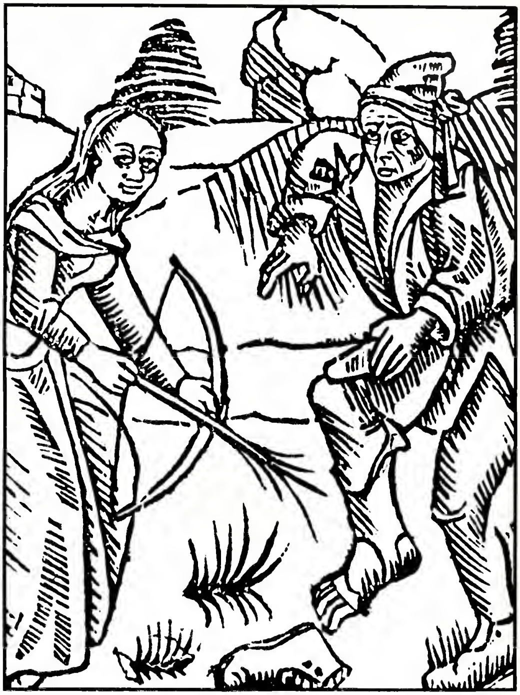
A celebrated English witch, Joan Flower, who was tried at Lincoln in 1619, was accused of revenging herself on the Earl of Rutland for the dismissal of her daughter, a servant in his household at Belvoir Castle. She obtained the righthand glove of one of the Earl's sons, Lord Henry Roos, rubbed it on the back of her familiar, a cat named Rutterkin, and then plunged it in boiling water, pricked it with a pin and buried it, meanwhile wishing that the glove's owner might never thrive. Within a week Lord Henry sickened, 'being much tormented', and eventually died. The witch also cursed the Earl and his wife, and 'boiled feathers and blood together, using devilish speeches and strange gestures'.

In Norfolk in 1583 Mother Gabley of King's Lynn was accused of 'boiling or rather labouring of certain eggs in a pail full of cold water', by which she caused the deaths of 13 men in a shipwreck. Another method of attack, usually employed against a thief, was the Black Fast. This involved abstaining from meat and milk, and all food





Mansell Collection



Mansell Collection

prepared with milk, while mentally projecting a current of venom against the thief until he either returned what he had stolen or died. A woman named Mabel Brigge was executed at York in 1538 for 'fasting upon' King Henry VIII in order to cause his death. She admitted that she had previously used the Black Fast against a thief, who had broken his neck before the fast ended.

Fascination and Glamour

The simplest techniques of psychic attack are 'ill-wishing' and, in the case of someone unfortunate enough to possess the Evil Eye, 'overlooking' or 'fascinating' the victim with a glance (see EYE). It was long believed in Europe that, when you look at something, a ray or beam of some kind flows out from your eyes to the thing seen, and that the ray or force which emanates from some people's eyes, voluntarily or involuntarily, is noxious and destructive.

The word 'fascinating' originally meant controlling someone by looking at him and came, by extension, to mean charming or enchanting. The Scottish word 'glamour', which came into English literature by way of Sir Walter Scott, meant the same thing the other way round, the effect of an enchantment cast on the eyes and causing hallucinations. Stories in which a hero becomes the helpless captive of a beautiful enchantress, who snares him by deluding his senses, are common in legend and folktale. The powerful sexual attraction of the enchantress is reflected in the connotations of such words as fascinating, glamorous, charmer, enchanting, entrancing and bewitching. The close connection between sex and the magic of sight also comes out in the belief that the Evil Eye was particularly likely to cause impotence.

Far left Exploits of Medea, the great enchantress of Greek legend, from a 4th-century vase: when her lover, Jason, chose another bride, the witch sent her rival a poisoned robe which killed the girl and her aged father: then, after slaying her two sons by Jason, Medea escaped in a chariot drawn by dragons. Two 14th-century woodcuts show (_above left_) a witch with her master the Devil in amorous mood and (_above right_) attacking a peasant, using a hazel wand

Psychic Recovery

There is a great deal that can be done upon the physical plane to help the person who is suffering from an occult attack... Sunlight is exceedingly valuable because it strengthens the aura and makes it much more resistant. People are often advised to go away into the country on this account, but for the victim of an occult attack to go into the depths of the country may not be the wisest thing, because elemental forces are much more potent away from towns, and if he is threatened by an uprush of atavistic forces, he had better cling to the haunts of men. The sea, too, is an elemental force that is best avoided, for water is an element intimately associated with psychism. Large bodies of water and high mountains should be avoided in choosing a health resort for a person suffering from psychic trouble. The best place is an inland spa. Games, physical training, massage, anything that improves the bodily condition, are invaluable, but long solitary walks should be avoided.

Dion Fortune *Psychic Self Defence*

An Evil Elemental

A witch could also injure an enemy by sending her familiar against him (see FAMILIARS). In modern occultism generally, the equivalent of the familiar is an artificial elemental which frequently takes some grotesque and frightening animal shape (see MAGIC). There is an occult theory that every human thought coalesces with one of the creatures of the astral plane, which temporarily embodies it. A mere passing impulse of annoyance with somebody will not last long in the astral world, any more than in this one, but a steady flow of malevolence will have more potentially dangerous results. C. W. Leadbeater, a friend and ally of Annie Besant in the early days of the Theosophical Society (see BESANT), explained in his book *The Astral Plane* that: 'A feeling of envious or jealous hatred towards another person sends an evil elemental to hover over him and seek for a weak point through which it can operate; and if the feeling be persistent, such a creature may be continually nourished by it and thereby be enabled to protract its undesirable activity for a long period. It can however, produce no effect upon the person towards whom it is directed unless he has himself some tendency which it can foster – some fulcrum for its lever, as it were. From the aura of a man of pure thought and good life all such influences at once rebound, finding nothing upon which they can fasten, and in that case, by a curious law, they react in all their force upon their original creator.'

When a magician, with deliberate intent, performs a ceremony of hatred and destruction, sinister creatures of the astral plane may be attracted to, or created by, the operation and will join in the attack. But the essential ingredient of the ritual is the vivid concentration of violent rage which the magician conjures up in his own mind and which he projects at his victim, wrapping him in an atmosphere of poisoned malevolence like a man trapped in a thick and evil mist. According to Eliphas Levi (see LEVI) in *The Key of the Mysteries*, 'through a series of almost impossible exercises... our nervous system, having been habituated to all tensions and fatigues, has become a kind of living galvanic pile, capable of condensing and projecting powerfully that light which intoxicates or destroys', and in this way 'it is possible to destroy life by the sudden congestion or withdrawal of the Astral Light'.

Hysteria and Nightmares

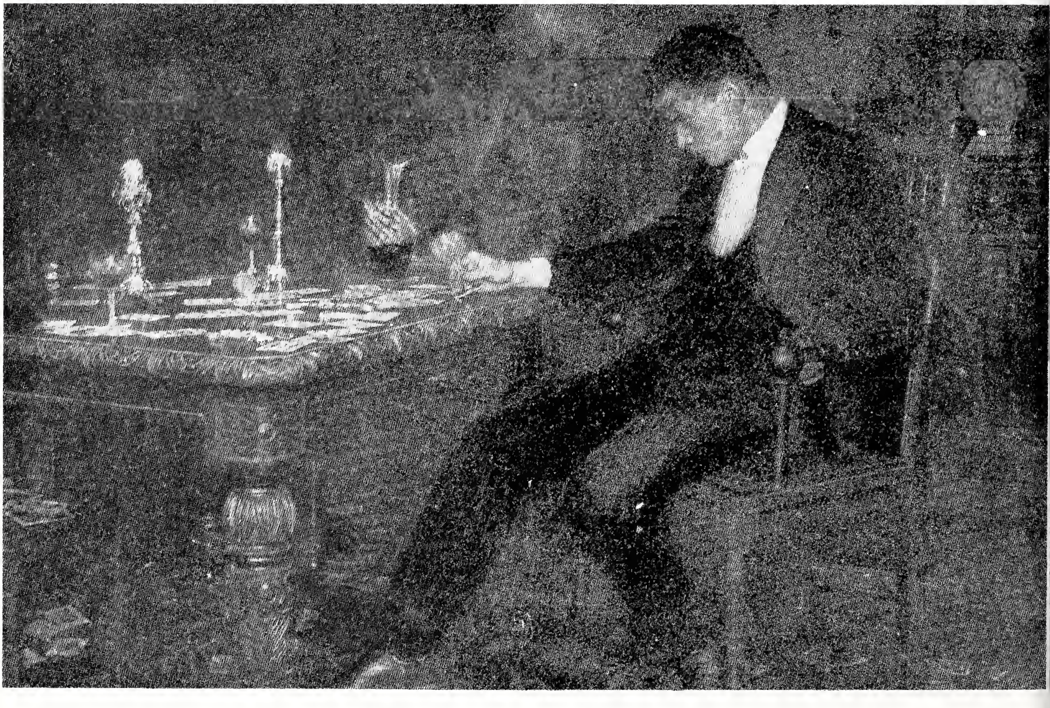
Although a magician powerful enough to kill by ill-wishing in this way is, fortunately for the rest of us, a rarity, the effects of a psychic attack on someone of sensitive and nervous disposition can be drastic. The characteristic symptoms are said to be extreme fear, anxiety and distress of mind, and also bruises on the body – sometimes in the shape of a goat's hoof or an ace of clubs – disgusting smells (especially of rotting flesh), smears of slime, perhaps with footprints in them, inexplicable outbreaks of fire, and the phenomena associated with poltergeists, which until comparatively recently were assumed to be evil spirits (see POLTERGEISTS).

In her book *Psychic Self Defence*, Dion Fortune (see FORTUNE) said that from the forces of positive evil in the world there have sprung evil intelligences that 'probably originated through the workings of Black Magic, which took the essential evil essence and organised it for purposes of its own'. When these creatures prey on human beings, they cause nightmares and terrifying hallucinations, and they also manifest themselves in sinister noises, slime and blood, balls of light and pungent stenches. Beings of this sort may seize on the careless or unwary magician. Dion Fortune quotes the case of a man who tried to use a magic square but failed to perform the ritual correctly. He began to suffer from feelings of terror at night, and eventually saw the creature which was obsessing him. 'Its eyes were closed and it was bearded, with long flowing hair. It seemed a blind force slowly waking to activity.' One night he saw a red snake uncoiling itself from under his bed and was so frightened that he jumped out of the window to escape it. The next time he saw the bearded creature, its long locks of hair had turned into the heads of snakes.

One of the dangers of travelling on the astral plane is said to be that the experimenter may fail to bring his astral self back into his physical body (see ASTRAL BODY). The astral body may wander helplessly about and may be attacked by evil forces. The probable short-term results will be hysteria, nightmares, fainting fits, splitting headaches and, in extreme cases, even insanity. The experience may leave permanent damage behind it in the form of lassitude, lack of persistence and inability to concentrate, which recalls some of the symptoms of bewitchment mentioned by Guazzo. This helpless wandering of the astral self is the modern occult parallel to the widespread primitive belief that the soul can leave the body and travel about, especially during sleep. Dreams are frequently explained as the experiences of the wandering soul, while the body is asleep. This wandering is dangerous because the soul runs the risk of being ensnared by a sorcerer or by an evil spirit, the result of which will be illness and insanity, and death if the soul is not rescued and restored (see SOUL).

RICHARD CAVENDISH

FURTHER READING: R. Cavendish, *The Black Arts* (Putnam, 1967); C. L'Estrange Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism* (Barnes and Noble, 1970 reprint); D. Fortune, *Psychic Self-Defence* (Weiser); C.W. Leadbeater, *The Astral Plane* (Theosophical Pub. House, 1973 reprint); R. H. Robbins, *Encyclopaedia of Witchcraft and Demonology* (Crown, 1959).



***Lost* by R. Velicogna. A sense of hopelessness, oppression and morbid imaginings are said to be symptomatic of psychic attack**

Genuine physical phenomenon, or mere theatrical sleight of hand? The 'surgeon with the rusty knife' was followed by many others, and successive investigations have failed to establish exactly what takes place

PSYCHIC SURGERY

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS is an age-old technique used by spiritual healers and, although it is still subject to much criticism, it is gaining ground as an acceptable alternative to orthodox medical treatment. However, one form of 'paranormal' treatment is unlikely ever to find itself the subject of serious debate among the medical profession – and that is the vexed subject of 'psychic surgery'.

Encountered almost exclusively in Brazil and the Philippines, this dramatically gory practice has provoked extreme reactions – both for and against – among those who have witnessed it, since it first became well-known in the 1950s. Part of the problem is its sheer theatricality: the 'surgeon' appears to open the patient's body with his bare hands and then apparently delves into the gaping flesh to locate and remove blood clots, tumours and other offending matter. No anaesthetic or antiseptic is used, yet the patient feels no pain and suffers no after-effects such as post-operative infection – and often he or she is completely cured.

The most famous of all psychic surgeons was the Brazilian Jose Pedro de Freitas, more commonly known by his nickname 'Arigo' – which means 'yokel' – who died in 1971. His extraordinary career began in the 1950s when, without warning, he rushed into the home of a dying woman and thrust a rusty knife into her vagina. He removed a huge uterine tumour, then collapsed sobbing. The woman recovered, and Arigo became known as 'the surgeon with the rusty knife', and something of a national hero.

Not everyone who came to his very frugal home in Congonhas do Campo received surgery. Often he did no more than stare at his patients, then diagnose their problems without asking questions. He would scribble down a prescription – frequently an unorthodox combination or amount of well-known drugs. Sometimes his prescription appeared to be for an almost lethal cocktail of drugs, yet in all known cases the patients not only survived, but thrived on them.

As Arigo's fame spread in the 1960s, people came from farther afield to witness his work. One researcher who travelled from New York was Andrija Puharich, who was later to become Uri Geller's mentor. Arigo removed a benign tumour from his arm within seconds, and Puharich took it back to the USA to have it analysed. It was indeed a human growth.

Arigo was never shown to have acted fraudulently, and thousands testified over the years to his unorthodox ability to heal. He was, however, jailed for two periods – one of 16 months – for practising medicine without qualifications. On both occasions his jailers allowed him out of prison to operate on the sick. He died in a road accident, having predicted it some time before.

Paraguayan Ivan Trilha performing psychic surgery in 1979

Fortean Picture Library

No one knows for certain what lay behind Arigo's talents, but he himself was in no doubt. When he operated he was discovered to be in a trance, and he spoke with a thick German accent which, he believed, was the spirit voice of one Dr Adolphus Fritz, who had died in 1918, but was working through him. This phenomenon was entirely acceptable both to Arigo himself and most of his patients, for as Spiritists they acknowledged the possibility of the dead working through the living.

Indeed, it was the Spiritualists' National Union (S.N.U.) of the UK that sponsored the visit of a couple of psychic surgeons to Britain in 1978. The husband-and-wife team of David and Helen Elizade – he Filipino and she a Cypriot – caused a stir when they appeared to use their bare hands to 'cut' open their patients and remove offending matter. But it was on their second visit, a year later, that controversy blew up in their faces.

Based at the S.N.U.'s headquarters, Stansted Hall in Essex, they made it known that they did not encourage the patients to bring any companions with them into the operating area. Was this because they had something to hide? The BBC thought it seemed suspicious, and sent along a television crew for their Nationwide programme, which was broadcast in May 1979. Their report was completely damning of the

Elizades' psychic surgery. The super-sceptic James Randi – stage magician and leading light of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) – was brought in to comment on film of the operations, and he had no hesitation in declaring them frauds. He drew the viewers' attention to the way the couple held their hands, remarking that it was characteristic of sleight of hand. More damning was his own convincing demonstration of fake 'psychic surgery, which involved him simply pushing his knuckles deep into the patient's flesh to give the impression of delving into the body. Blood capsules added the finishing touch.

The final straw for the Elizades was the laboratory analysis of the blood clots that they had removed from the patients at Stansted Hall (and which had been smuggled out by the Nationwide team). They were, it was discovered, the blood of pigs. Gordon Higginson, then president of the SNU – from whom the clots had allegedly been removed – simply refused to accept the findings, while Helen Elizade said: 'I think this is very strange, although I have heard that the structure of the blood does change.' Roger Cook, the investigating journalist for Nationwide, had other ideas, stating categorically that: '...the Elizades are unscrupulous frauds and liars, exploiting the chronically sick...'

Several of their patients came forward to testify to the character and efficacy of the Elizades, but it was too late. They fled the country and were informed that if they ever tried to return they would be arrested.

Investigations Continued

It was not the end of psychic surgery by a long way, however, even in the UK. In 1992, British Spiritualist Stephen Turreff, who 'operated' on patients while apparently possessed by another dead German doctor, was the subject of one of James Randi's television programmes in the series 'James Randi – Psychic Investigator' and was exhaustively pilloried. However, behind the scenes all did not go entirely to plan for Randi, and a GP, who had been expected to criticise Tureff, refused to do so, saying that he was not inclined to ruin a man's career on the basis of a 30-second film.

Also on the panel of experts for that particular television show were Professor Arthur Ellison and the Reverend Roger Crossley, both of whom had helped to organise a conference in west London on the subject of psychic surgery shortly beforehand. Hundreds of people had packed into the Porchester Centre to hear talks by interested parties, including Sister Fleur, a psychic surgeon from the Philippines. There were also operations carried out in the hall, which were filmed and observed by several experts in sleight of hand, including the Magic Circle's Magician of the Year, David Berglas.

Not one of the 'operations' was effective. Several volunteer patients were caused excruciating pain, although none of them was in any way cut, and nobody admitted to feeling in any way better for the experience. Later a tearful Sister Fleur condemned the 'vibrations' of the place and the conditions in which they were supposed to work, and declared that she hated London and would never return. Perhaps she had a point: the proceedings had resembled something of a bear garden.

Fortean Picture Library

Ivan Trilha operates upon a patient's eye

Berglas had no hesitation in denouncing the little work they had managed to do as fraudulent, although he couched his opinions in considerably more diplomatic terms than had Randi. There are many commentators, however, who feel that the point of psychic surgery is not its objective authenticity, but the fact that it gets results, perhaps due to the autosuggestion involved. It is undoubtedly true that many people have been cured, even when the 'tumour' that was removed from them began life inside a chicken.

In the 1970s the writer Lyall Watson visited the Philippines and witnessed at first-hand the work of 22 psychic surgeons – over a thousand operations in all. In his book *The Romeo Error* (1976), Watson describes a typical operation – which lasted just five minutes. A middle-aged woman, suffering from abdominal pain, was asked to lie on a table. Her abdomen was bared and a somewhat dirty towel laid over her skirt. Watson searched it and found nothing. The healer, who wore a short-sleeved shirt and was found, on being searched, to be concealing nothing about his person, then said a prayer. Watson himself filled a bowl with ordinary tap water and handed the surgeon this, plus some cottonwool. The surgeon cleaned the woman's abdomen with them, then, as Watson describes:

> 'He is now working just to the right of her navel, and suddenly there is a red colour. It could be blood. At first it is watery, mixing with the moisture on her skin, but now it darkens and gurgles quite strongly up between his fingers....I can see what looks like connective tissue, thin, transparent, obviously elastic, red and bloody.'

The surgeon seemed to delve deeply with his hands into the woman's abdominal cavity and a large round object appeared to well up between his fingers. Seconds later, he lifted it clear of the patient's body with forceps and cut it off. He dropped the cyst into Watson's palm. The writer said: 'It is warm and, when I press it, only a little blood oozes out. It seems to be hard inside.'

Despite this operation, when Watson came to examine the woman's skin there was no visible mark at all, just a little local heat. The patient walked off slowly, apparently healed.

There have been many similar testimonies by reputable Western witnesses to the apparent genuineness of psychic surgery, yet there is always the nagging doubt that – if they had any background in sleight of hand – it is possible that they then might well have detected something amiss. No such difficulties faced the Reverend Roger Crossley on his visits to the Philippines, for he was himself a highly-respected member of the Magic Circle. He may have come away convinced that many of the surgeons are fraudulent, but he also declared that several of them – including Sister Fleur – were genuine. He was also at pains to point out that, although some of the psychic surgeons amass a small fortune from their work, many will accept nothing – not even a gift – from those who come to them for healing.

Unexpected Conclusion

In 1973 and in 1975 an investigative team that included conjurors, parapsychologists, doctors and psychiatrists from seven countries visited the Philippines and came to at least one unexpected conclusion. Although admitting that fraud was indeed perpetrated on a large scale, they declared that 'the factual existence and daily practice of several types of psychoenergetic phenomena by several native healers was clearly established. The practice of materializing and dematerializing human blood, tissue and organs as well as non-human objects was found.' And Roger Crossley had noted that, during an operation, one psychic surgeon had apparently levitated several inches off the floor. No one drew any attention to it.

So perhaps it is not stage magic – conjuring or sleight of hand – that is involved, but real magic, what one might term 'sleight of mind'? Far-fetched though this hypothesis is, it carries echoes of other healing feats and miracles (see MIRACLES).

Yet again, there may be subtle self-healing forces at work. Many of the Western visitors to the Filipino psychic surgeons have been given up by their doctors: it is their last chance. As British writer Phillipa Pullar said of her visit in the 1980s, 'It was the journey that was important; not just the physical trip, but what was going on inside me, emotionally and spiritually... I saw several surgeons but the real healing came when I was by myself on a nearby island... I nearly died but the experience was sublime, mystical, something that made me realise just why I had made the journey and what all my journeys were about.'

In her case the psychic surgery had clearly provoked a crisis in her illness – a severe gynaecological condition – and she came through it a changed person. To her, questions of sleight of hand were irrelevant, and one suspects that they are also singularly unimportant to the thousands of others who put their lives in the hands of the psychic surgeons.

LYNN PICKNETT

PSYCHOKINESIS

In 1936 E. M. Sturgess claimed that he had made a pendulum move without touching it. The claim was challenged, but since then experiments have produced evidence to suggest that the mind can influence matter

Harry Price Library

PSYCHOKINESIS or PK is what the layman calls 'mind over matter'. It is the ability to influence the objective environment without the use of the motor system of the body (the muscles and glands). PK is the counterpart of extra-sensory perception or ESP, which is the acquisition of knowledge without sensory aid (see EXTRA-SENSORY PERCEPTION). These two abilities together make up the communication or exchange a person may have with his surroundings in the form of experiences that are familiarly called 'psychic'. Such communication is better known as parapsychical or psi behaviour, and its study is called parapsychology (or psychical research). PK ability is closely interrelated with ESP but it can well be handled as a separate topic – one that is today only beginning to command as much human and scientific interest as the ESP phase of psi behaviour.

Reports of PK happenings appear in the records of the past as far back as records go. Today of course it is impossible to check on the reliability of such older reports as are available, but at least men believed they were witnessing miraculous physical events that seemed to have their origin in superhuman agency.

Whether the production of these mysterious physical effects was associated with the prevailing religious doctrine or attributed to one of the many systems of magic, the individual who was believed to exercise control over them was likely to become an influential member of the community, whether priest or magician. He might be the tribal rainmaker or healer or the practitioner of some strange power to save or destroy. Belief in this ability to control the physical environment may still be found even today, and not only in less sophisticated cultures. There are actually many unorthodox practices of healing that suggest PK still going on within sight of some of the modern medical centres. For example, warts are reported to be removed from men and animals, at least without known physical intermediation.

Other 'magical' therapies are practised as well, such as the control of bleeding or the counteraction of injury from burns. Most of these healings are not expressly in the name of religion, although the practitioner may personally believe that it is God's work he is doing.

How valid these claims are no one can safely say. Certainly no practically dependable application of the alleged powers has emerged and persisted over the centuries as evidence of a reliable principle. Belief in supernatural physical effects has steadily declined with the advancement of the natural sciences, but this does not in itself prove that no PK function ever operated to produce the effects men believed were unexplainable by physics. At most it indicates that the evidence for the PK interpretation has not been good enough for the educated modern intellect.

Heritage from the Casino

The one magical practice that has persisted and even flourished right on down to the present day is gambling. In games of chance the belief in luck, good and bad, is an intuitive acceptance of the traditional magical interpretation. Consistent winning (or for that matter consistent losing) in an honest game of pure chance would seem to require an element of psi ability. While in some of the games the most likely type of ability that could bring luck would be ESP, in others, such as the dice and roulette systems, PK would be the type needed.

The point is that the fair game of chance is basically a contest of psi abilities, whether it depends on the successful guessing of an opponent's card or on the effective influencing of his dice. But the conditions of play do not permit a clear-cut measure of the psi element, and to a large extent they work against the consistent use of it. What was needed was the seclusion and protection of the laboratory and a proper test design instead of a complicated game.

Early in the 1880s Professor Charles Richet adapted a game-like card-guessing technique to the testing of his hypnotized subject Leonie for clairvoyant ability. He also applied the new probability mathematics to the results. Leonie was 'lucky' enough to guess many more cards correctly than mean chance expectation, and when the extra-chance odds of these results were calculated they were (in today's terms) highly significant. It was an important step, but it was little noticed at the time.

The Duke PK Experiments

A half-century later, and in quite a parallel way, I introduced the technique of dice throwing at a climactic point in the ESP experiments that were going on in the department of psychology at Duke University. Following a tip from a young gambler, I undertook to test what some people have long maintained, that in certain states of mind, which they call 'hot', they can will dice to fall with desired faces turned up. The many volunteer student subjects who took part in these tests were stimulated to high motivation by the game-like contest with the challenge to beat chance, and a large body of results accumulated, which for the most part favoured the PK hypothesis.

It was easy to apply the mathematics of probability, which furnished us with the chance expectation for each test. The overall number of hits (as the dice were thrown for a designated face or combination of faces) was found in most of the series conducted to be statistically significant (that is, to exceed the chance rate of scoring by so large a deviation as could not reasonably be ascribed to chance alone). This success continued from experiment to experiment and from one research worker to another.

On sober reflection, possible after many years, it should not have been so surprising as it was to find these scores of people able to influence those dice. There had already been a strong case made for the clairvoyant ESP hypothesis, and it seemed logical to think that if the subject could communicate with a deck of cards completely cut off from sensory contact, the principle might be reversible – for every action in Nature there is an equal and opposite reaction. In other words, something might be happening to the deck of cards which was under the influence of the mind of the subject. If so, then it should be even more effective on the rolling dice, where a subtle influence could be more delicately registered.

Some Unknown Mental Agency

There was also the background of strange physical effects reported in the past, not only miracles and magical practices but spontaneous psychic experiences. Many of these last were purely physical effects, like the unaccountable stopping of a clock at the time of a death, or the falling of a picture at the time of a crisis happening to the person represented.

While these were not as numerous as the ESP type of spontaneous experiences, a substantial collection of cases of unusual physical phenomena had been accumulated, especially by the psychical research societies (see SPONTANEOUS PSI EXPERIENCES). Then too there had been a vast amount of reporting of the phenomena of physical mediumship, describing strange happenings that if correctly reported and honestly produced (large questions) would suggest that they had been produced by some kind of unknown mental agency (see MEDIUMS). Even though little credence was given to any of the claims of nonexperimental physical happenings that suggested PK, they were puzzling enough to justify attention to the possibility.

It takes more than an open mind, of course, to set off on such a new project. There was the argument that since the ESP experiments had confirmed one type of spontaneous experiences, why should we not look at the others? Only a few months before the start of work on PK, in fact, a beginning had been made on precognition. Then too, coming as it did on top of the first major discoveries about the ESP types, the PK work seemed almost to follow those successes in logical relation. Clairvoyance was apparently a subject-object interaction in one direction. Why not expect a reaction in the other, as the spontaneous cases had suggested? Besides, the sensorimotor parallel suggested ESP and PK as an extrasensorimotor analogue. So PK fitted into a niche in the developing rational picture.

Yet the work with the dice did not immediately receive full attention from the group at the Duke Laboratory, and for a time was a little overwhelmed. At that stage, with the first report on the ESP work about to appear, the new discovery was just too much to handle with sufficient reflection and comprehension for immediate publication. Even the reporting of the precognition results was delayed for nearly five years and, as it turned out, the findings on PK were held back for almost ten.

An important new consideration arose which nevertheless required that PK be taken quite seriously, even before publication, in connection with some of the ESP experiments. There came a point in the research in precognition at which PK became an important competing hypothesis. Some workers in parapsychology found precognition so hard to take seriously as a hypothesis that even PK was preferable if it could possibly explain the results of the precognition tests.

One of these enthusiastic critics in the laboratory challenged the adequacy of the mechanical card shuffler used for a time in randomizing the order of target cards for precognition tests. He thought PK was a possible factor in favourably influencing the shuffling process so as to make the cards match the predictions made by the subject. This and other methods for preparing targets for precognition (for example, the rolling of dice) had therefore to be discontinued. (Later on, as will be seen, the tables were turned, and precognition gave PK experimenters a difficult time as a counter-hypothesis in their own research.)

Progress Retarded

The PK studies continued throughout the period of delayed publication, so that by 1943, when it was decided to release the first report, there were 24 completed projects, most of which would normally have been published over the waiting interval. But even so, the long lead given the ESP side of the field represents a comparative disadvantage to the PK branch and accounts for the appearance of retarded progress in this equally important section of the field since the first PK report appeared. More recently there have been signs, however, that this imbalance may very soon be corrected.

The problems that needed handling in adapting dice throwing to PK testing were recognized from the start; they are much the same as those which have to be watched if an honest game is to be played in games with dice. Precautions have to be taken against skills in handling the cubes that might influence their fall, as well as in correcting for possible inequalities in the faces.

In the laboratory it was possible to take the necessary steps, which the game situation would not always permit. The 'game' could be modified to suit the experimenter's

Psi research has entered upon a new period, marked especially by the greater sophistication of testing devices

needs. For instance, correction for imperfections in the dice was best achieved by equalizing the number of throws for all the faces as targets. If all the faces are equally well represented in numbers of trials, any imperfections in one will be balanced off by the others. Similarly, the ways of throwing the dice progressed, from hand and cup throwing to stages of completely mechanized gravity release or rotation in baffled cages, in which no human factor entered.

The Diagonal Decline

The most clinching evidence of PK was a psychological by-product of the research itself, the diagonal decline effect resulting from the quarter distribution (QD) analysis of the records. First of all, it is an independent valuation, and it is one that at a single stroke effectively answers all the major questions that the researcher attempts to cope with in a well-designed and well-controlled PK experiment.

The QD analysis developed as a result of examining, in 1942, the earlier PK records to see whether declines in scoring rates, such as had occurred frequently in ESP experiments, were also to be found in the PK data. It was immediately evident that there was not only a decline from the top to the bottom of the record page but also from the left to the right half, so that on dividing the page into quarters the upper left showed the greatest number of hits and the lower right the fewest. This is the typical diagonal decline. The difference between those two quarters was statistically significant and it made a formidable and independent case in itself, whatever else the experiment showed or failed to show.

All that was necessary to meet the conditions for the analysis was that the page be made up of records of trials made under uniform conditions – as, indeed, most of them were. All the considerations that normally had to be watched, such as dice bias, nonrandom throwing or recording errors, could not be supposed to decline as the QD analyses had shown the actual results did. One major point was that neither subjects nor experimenter could have had any anticipation that years later these analyses would be made. They were thus as objective as fingerprints.

It turned out that 18 out of the 24 series were recorded in such a way that the QD analysis could be applied. Of these, 16 showed the diagonal decline from upper left to lower right, and when the entire 18 were combined the significance of the difference between the upper left and lower right quarters gave astronomically high odds against a chance theory for the results.

This was not all of the QD evidence; there were still smaller blocks of data in the records which could be quartered and treated in the same way to see how general these position effects were. The same effect was found to be widely distributed in a similarly highly significant way. One virtue of these position effects is that they can be examined over and over again and thus have much the same firmness as rock strata to the geologist. It has been especially advantageous to have had this strong foundation laid under the PK work which has not been so well represented in the amount of research done as have the various types of ESP.

The Electronic Era

The conclusive QD evidence for PK came to a head in 1945. By a quarter-century later psi research had entered upon a new period, marked especially by the greater sophistication of testing devices that was possible. It could be called the electronic era, since much of the apparatus in use in facilitating psi testing is of that character. Dr Helmut Schmidt, Director of the Utrecht Institute for Parapsychology, designed a number of test devices adaptable to specific types of psi, all based upon the same essential mechanical principles.

The randomization of events on which the tests are based was dependent upon the emission of electrons in radioactive decay. This basic process can determine the order of targets for ESP tests or provide a random order of events for the subject to try to influence in PK tests. In these latter, the subject mentally concentrated on trying to make a designated one of two (or more) lamps light up, by influencing the selective action of the random generator. The subject had nothing to do but concentrate on the lamp assigned to him as target for a given run of trials. The experimenter was not necessary at all except to give the instructions to the subject. Mechanical recording and provision for mechanical analyses of the data were features of the system.

One wonders, of course, in this new stage and style of testing, just as in the ESP testing with the same types of machines, whether the central factor in the equipment, the electron, has any importance in itself. It is still too early to say whether the size of particle has anything to do with the rate of success or whether other systems of generating random targets.

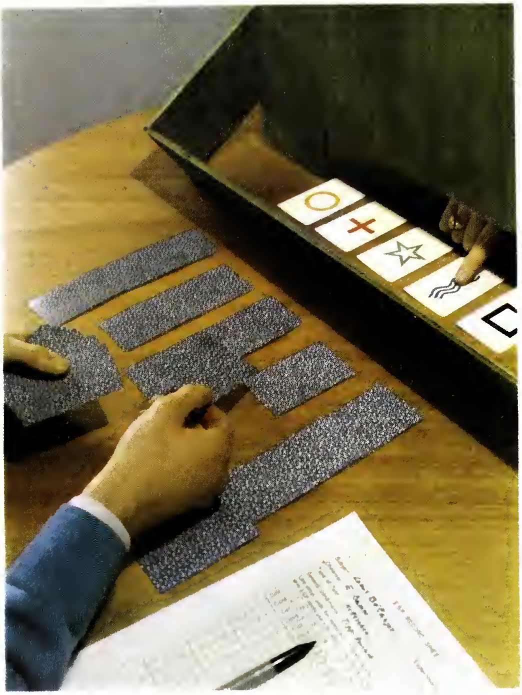
The Nature of PK

Enough is already known about PK, however, to allow some illuminating generalizations about its nature. Of these, first consideration should be given to the relation of PK to the physical world. Almost immediately in the early testing at Duke, it was noticed that none of the physical properties of the dice seemed to be important in relation to the scoring rate – that is, unless they led to psychological preferences. For example, the subjects found that they could achieve a better scoring rate (a better rate per die) while throwing two dice at a time instead of one. Yet two dice certainly made the task more difficult from a purely physical viewpoint.

Again, when two dice per throw were compared with six, the larger number gave the better rate of success per die. But the subjects recognized in all these comparisons that they liked to throw two dice better than one, and preferred six to two. The larger number made a faster-moving and more efficient procedure than the smaller.

Essentially the same type of effect was observed with respect to two different sizes of dice used in the test. Very small dice did not do well and exceptionally large ones were not as high in yield as medium sizes (around .75 inch cube). Again the rate of success seemed to be largely a matter of the size that could most easily be picked up, observed quickly and handled nicely. The actual size as a factor appeared to have nothing to do with the amount of success.

The actual mass of the material from which dice were constructed seemed to make no difference either, so far as comparisons could be accurately determined. Dice of medium weight were the best-liked by most subjects; for example, those made of plastic or lighter metals such as aluminium were popular and gave good results. Dice made of lead and those made of balsa wood were respectively too heavy or too light to be



favoured by the subjects, and under the conditions of the early tests neither yielded scores comparable to the better-liked materials. A number of other comparative tests involving physical features further supported the point that the physical characteristics of the target objects in PK were not the determinative ones. The mental factor of preference was usually clearly the dominant one.

Avoiding Physical Preferences

What was most needed was a type of test that would allow the physical differences to be tested without the subject's preference being allowed to influence him, at least consciously. Such an experiment was carried out at the Institute for Parapsychology by William E. Cox. Lead and celluloid dice were painted alike and compared in PK tests without the subjects being aware that two different weights of dice were being used. They were also handled mechanically in the same apparatus and were made to roll at the same speed so as not to show differences indicating weight.

Not even the observer who did the recording knew there were two different weights of dice; yet the amount of evidence of PK effect was almost identically the same for the light and the heavy ones. The ratio of mass was about one to seven, and such a difference would of course be expected to have an effect upon the energy required to alter the fall of the cubes. Almost certainly this experiment, if conducted in the manner of the earlier ones mentioned, should have introduced a preferential difference in the amount of PK effect registered. As it is, the effect of density on psi capacity seems to be ruled out again.

In the Schmidt experiment with PK on the electron level of target magnitude, the selection of the lamp to be lighted depended on a single quantum of energy, yet the result did not show a different order of magnitude of scoring success over that of the various dice throwing tests, some of which involved incomparably larger target objects. This would appear to be strong evidence that physical differences in the targets as such do not affect the comparative magnitude of PK scores.

In the tests on extra-sensory perception, results on that side of the psi field did not shown any physical relation either. Space-time conditions, which are so limiting in sensorimotor exchange, have not been found to show any well-confirmed relation to the results of comparative ESP tests. Thus no purely physical theory of psi gets much of a leg to stand on from the evidence of either ESP or PK.

But while this draws a major distinction around psi it does not necessarily imply any discontinuity in Nature. To say that psi is superphysical is not to call it supernatural. Rather it is to indicate that some other natural basis of exchange will have to be inferred, and eventually found and confirmed if it is there. Since effective communication is involved (even though not often highly reliable) there should by definition have to be an energetic interaction, and this again raises interesting new questions, not for speculation but for exploration.

At this point, of course, the concept of a psi energy is not much more than a working hypothesis. It is true that mental energy has from time to time been suggested by psychologists, but until the work in experimental parapsychology began they had no way of testing the hypothesis of an energy that is different from the recognized physical systems.

PK research experiments with dice, conducted by Haakon Forwald, were found to produce effects that were measurable in terms of standard units of energy; yet under the test conditions no known physical energy could conceivably have been responsible for these effects. It is true that the only measurement possible was the physical differences in the results produced. These were the mean distances between dice released from the same point and allowed to roll by gravity, with one side of the table the designated target in one set of trials and the opposite side in another. Thus the cubes of known weight were caused by PK to roll to the side intended to a measurable average distance.

Forwald, of course, was not directly measuring the energy which influenced the dice, but rather the resultant lateral displacement. However, at this point it is a question as to whether concepts such as quantity (associated primarily with the physical order) are indeed applicable to this psi function or for that matter to any process that is distinctly mental.

Picturepoint London

Facing page Psychokinesis (PK) became an important competing hypothesis to ESP, for it was suggested that significant scoring of hits in card-guessing tests might be due, not to precognition, but to the ability to influence the shuffle, in such a way as to make the fall of cards match the 'predictions' made by the subject. It is now considered that ESP and PK are not separated or competing abilities but effects of a single ability, which parapsychologists call 'psi'. PK required ESP for any intelligent hypothesis of its operation, and in most experiments the subject could not give intelligent guidance to PK without using ESP at the same time, for example to know where, how and when to apply the effort

Above Much of the earlier evidence for PK has come from experiments with dice throwing, testing a subject's ability to will the dice to fall with specified faces showing. PK may account for what the gambler calls a winning, or even losing, streak of luck, which may in fact be the product of psi ability

Right Sherpas playing dice in a village in Nepal: the belief that in certain states of mind one can psychologically control the fall of the dice is familiar to gamblers the world over

Targets in PK Tests

What kinds and states of matter can PK influence? First approaches have usually to be made at the easiest point of attack. Clairvoyance was the simplest starting point for assault on the ESP side. In PK it had to be something with moving targets (PK-MT) since matter in motion offers advantages; much of the PK work done since its beginning in 1934 has been with targets in motion, mostly dice.

A certain amount of testing of PK with moving targets has involved the use of electrical equipment, such as electric clocks and pendulum devices adapted to the tests. The attempt has been made also to use the flow of liquids or sand as target matter. Tests have likewise been made on micro-physical targets, as in the emanation of electrons from radioactive substances.

On the whole, nothing in the PK testing has thus far consistently exceeded the rate of success with the dice-throwing methods. It still remains to be seen how the work with electronic targets will compare with dice tests. So far there is no indication of a new level of magnitude of PK performance to correspond to the microscopic size of the targets.

As stated, all these materials have been inanimate objects in motion. What about PK on living targets, or PK-LT? The idea has long prevailed in popular folklore that some individuals have the power to influence plant growth and others to affect animals, including man, physically in a variety of ways. The plant specialists are said to possess what is known as a 'green thumb', and others are believed to be able to induce healing of the sick by unknown powers that suggest PK.

In recent years efforts have been made to test these healing and growth-promoting powers in the laboratory. The PK tests most often tried were based on the attempt to influence the growth rate of seedlings and the best-known of these efforts is the work of Dr Bernard Grad of McGill University Medical School. But there have been a few efforts to influence animal healing and other effects on the animal organism. It would be fair to say that altogether a good beginning has been made on PK tests with living targets; but a hard and fast valuation need not be forced at this stage. The research continues, but it should not be confused with fantastic and prematurely popularized claims of emotional reactions of plants and so-called plant perception.

The stiffest challenge facing the PK researcher today is the question, now being investigated, of whether static inanimate objects can demonstrably be influenced psychokinetically. This is a point at which to reflect on the fact that, one by one, the types of psi effect suggested by the spontaneous cases of psychic experience have been verified by experiment or, as in the sector of the PK of living targets, there is at least a fairly satisfactory case. One cannot of course argue that we may now therefore conclude that PK on static targets (PK-ST) will have to follow, but it does appear much more plausible as one thinks back over the progress in the past on the other target areas of psi.

The more favourable climate of today has led to increased attention being given to some of the claims for the PK-ST type of effect. There has been some attention to the claims for darkroom seances, for example, the reports of tables levitated by PK. Increased attention is also being given to reports of poltergeist and haunting cases in the attempt to verify claims of unexplainable movements of objects that support PK.

On the American scene the best-known effort to achieve PK-ST has been in the attempts to project thought impressions onto a photographic film. While some psi workers such as Dr Jule Eisenbud were led to the conclusion that a genuine psi effect had been involved in these productions, such firm acceptance at this stage would abandon the criteria followed in the other sectors of psi investigation. If the results reported were indeed due to genuine PK the capacity involved should be expected to respond, as efforts continue to devise better conditions and make conclusive demonstrations possible in due course.

The relation of PK to the ESP types of psi phenomena has become clearer as the different types have been studied in more detail. During the early investigations it seemed necessary to treat each phenomenon as though it was the result of a separate function, and difficulties resulted from these distinctions, especially in attempting to distinguish clairvoyance and telepathy from each other in the experimental situation.

Another problem arose in trying to perform a PK experiment that completely ruled out the possibility of precognition and conversely (as mentioned above) in trying to investigate precognition with the hypothesis of PK experimentally eliminated. Eventually, however, these conflicts were resolved and each type of psi was satisfactorily established as phenomenologically distinct.

But even though much time was expended in separating PK and ESP by independent demonstration, there was frank recognition of the fact that PK required ESP for any intelligent hypothesis of its operation. In fact in most of the experiments it was impossible for the subject to give intelligent guidance to PK without using ESP at the same time (for example, to know where, how and when to apply the effort).

Accordingly, even while the separation experiments were going on, it was recognized that the distinction between types was a superficial one and that PK and ESP were essentially aspects of the same function. Moreover, the similarity of conditions that affected both of them further confirmed the hypothesis of the unity of psi. Gradually workers in the field came to regard psi as fundamentally a single process of which the different types of phenomena were surface manifestations.

Some of the experimental studies came in due course to take this unitary character of psi for granted, especially those in which PK tests were carried out with the targets unknown to the subject at the time. In some of these the targets were enclosed in opaque envelopes until the end of the series for which they were intended. In others, as in the distance experiments by the English workers G. W. Fisk and D. J. West, the target was set up at a distance of 170 miles from the subject while she, a medical woman, threw the dice with significant success, depending upon ESP guidance as to the target face. Distance has been found to be no impediment to ESP.

Whether distance between the subject and target would have any effect upon success in an adequately controlled PK test would be difficult to say at present on the basis of the limited evidence. The distances in tests have been relatively short (30 feet) and subjective factors could easily enter in the way of preferences; but the results, such as they are, harmonize well with the other findings regarding the absence of any physical influence.

But it is just at this point that the view of PK as being an aspect of the psi function is very important. Since psi is a unitary ability and the ESP tests have shown no limitation thus far due to spacetime, it seems to follow logically that PK would not be limited either; it is the same ability with another form of expression. So there should not be any need to do PK experiments at longer distances.

One of the most important findings about PK, and one that was already known about the ESP types, is that it seems to be reversible in its effect. The easiest way to describe this is to go back to the example of luck in games of chance; this form of psi (as it seems likely to be) can be both good and bad, and thus, as everyone knows, lead to winning or losing. The discovery in parapsychology of this tendency to psi-missing, as the opposite of psi-hitting, has been probably the greatest single contribution thus far made to the understanding of the psi process. For some unknown reason psi-missing is much more prevalent in the ESP researches than in those of PK.

It happens, however, that the Cox experiment involving the comparison of lead and celluloid dice offers an instructive example of psi-missing. It will be recalled that the dice were indistinguishable to the subjects and that they gave equally significant results in spite of their large difference in weight. However, there was an important difference: while the celluloid gave the normally expected psi-hitting, the lead dice gave psi-missing results – that is, negative deviations. Both kinds of dice were activated together, and for the same target face, yet the heavy ones deviated as far below the chance mean as the light ones did above.

The results were fairly uniform too among the different subjects and sessions, indicating that the participants were in some way cognizing the kinds of dice and reacted to both with equal measure but in opposite directions, even while they were unconscious of any difference. Some sort of discrimination was evidently involved in this 'psi differential effect' as it has been called, which shows up almost regularly when an experiment is conducted with two different kinds of methods or targets, or other circumstances. (Such a subtle unconscious differential in the operation of the mind could be an important principle of wider scope.)

Frontiers of PK Research

The years ahead may be expected to see the expansion of PK investigations into much territory still unexplored. Interest is growing in meeting the challenge of applying PK to static targets, but it is even more active at present in the use of living targets, with a wide range of plant and animal species and their functions being put to the test. New work with animals has independently confirmed and amplified the discovery of precognition in mice. With the promise this gives of providing parapsychology with a 'guinea pig' there should be accelerated interest in the animal branch of the field.

Is there a foreseeable limit to this PK power of the mind and its other aspect, ESP? Nothing has yet been found that is beyond the range of the extra-sensory ability to apprehend knowledge, and the progress of PK research is approaching a similar generalization on its side. This is to say that man's range of communication has (or promises to have), in principle, no limitation. On the side of modesty, however, let it be recalled that the exercise of these psi abilities is still too slight and uncertain for them to be of serious practical use. When they become reliable the consequences will obviously be fantastic; but the work to be done is enormous too. Fortunately it is now possible to do it, and it will get done in time.

J.B.RHINE

Since the preceding article, by one of the most distinguished experimenters in ESP and PK, was written, investigations into the phenomena have continued, although with varied success. In 1972, Uri Geller (see GELLER) came into public awareness with his astonishing feats of metal bending. Geller had only to appear on television for reports of forks and spoons being bent out of shape in many thousands of homes to flood in. His abilities led to psychokinetic metal bending becoming a field of study in itself.

In 1974, Matthew Manning (see MANNING) gave a demonstration to a group of 21 scientists; however, the first scientist to study the metal-bending phenomenon rigorously was Professor J. B. Hasted of Birkbeck College, London, who published his findings in a co-authored article in *Nature*, in April 1975. He took the view that it was in some way the product of the unconscious mind.

Another PK subject was the New York artist Ingo Swann, who apparently could change the temperature of nearby objects and affect magnetic fields.

More recently, research has been directed toward the further investigation of PK effects upon biological growth, with all the implications that this might have in the subject of healing. Finding that the control and replication of experiments with such standard laboratory subjects as mice or plant seedlings was dauntingly complex, researchers turned their attention to more easily-handled targets such as live micro-organisms, enzymes and single cells in test-tube cultures.

Some impressive preliminary results have been claimed from these experiments, while other researchers have taken their investigations even closer to the boundary between the organic and the physical world, and experimented with PK effects upon the growth of crystals. In Australia, Bevan L. Reid has claimed to demonstrate influences upon crystals over distances up to hundreds of metres. Mathematical calculations of the thermodynamics of crystal growth suggest that the system is not a closed one, but continuously interacts with its ambient space, and some successful parallels have been drawn with quantum mechanics. There are implications, too, for the theory of morphogenetic fields (see MORPHIC RESONANCE). Research programmes continue all over the world.

FURTHER READING: Hoyt L. Edge, Robert L. Morris, John Palmer and Joseph H. Rush, *Foundations of Parapsychology* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986); J. B. Rhine ed., *Progress in Parapsychology* (Parapsychology Press, Durham, North Carolina, 1971); J. B. Rhine and J. G. Pratt, *Para-psychology, Frontier Science of the Mind* (C. C. Thomas 1974); Louisa E. Rhine, *Mind Over Matter: Psychokinesis* (Collier, 1970); D. Robinson, *To Stretch a Plank: a Survey of Psychokinesis* (Nelson-Hall, 1980); D. Scott Rogo, *Minds and Motion* (Taplinger, 1978); Russell Targ and Harold E. Puthoff, *Mind Reach: Scientists Look at Psychic Ability* (Delacorte Press, 1977); L. L. Vasiliev, *Experiments in Distant Influence* (Wildwood House, 1976).

By doing no more than hold some object – a cap, a photograph – psychometrists may be able to give the most amazing, detailed information concerning the person, and the circumstances, with which the object is connected

PSYCHOMETRY

THE USE OF AN ARTICLE, called an 'inductor', as a means of receiving extra-sensory impressions is known as object reading, psychoscopy or, most usually, psychometry. Extra-sensory perception (paragnosis) is a broad term covering various concepts, of which the most important are telepathy and clairvoyance. Clairvoyance, the ability to see objects not actually present, may be in time – seeing into the past, present or future – or in space (telaesthesia), in which case it should be considered as synonymous with clairvoyance in the present.

The following experiment will serve as an example of a psychometric test of which the results depend upon telepathy. It concerns Mrs L.M., whom the present writer tested in a series of experiments. On one of these occasions, I handed her an envelope containing a photograph that I had received from Mr K., whom I knew personally. She put her right hand briefly into the partially open envelope without looking at the photograph, which served as an inductor but contained no clues for practical purposes. Mrs M. commented as follows: 'Someone who reads and writes a lot. He is at home in any field. He performs journalistic work. He is quickly stimulated. He leads a hurried and irregular life. I see him writing while seated in a train. He picks up every scrap of news. This is not just curiosity – he has to keep abreast of everything that happens. He can be curt at times. Stacks of papers lie on his desk in a complete jumble. He has a good sense of humour. He speaks foreign languages. Machines form part of his environment. I hear a regular thumping sound. The air reeks. I smell a peculiar, vile scent. The uproar is awful. He himself does not work among the machines, but he walks between them. He sits at a desk. He has a feeling for poetry. He gets a lot of books sent to him.'

It was totally unknown to Mrs M. that Mr K. was the managing editor of a provincial newspaper. This case was therefore a direct 'hit'. I was in frequent touch with Mr K. in those days, and had visited his office several times, and there was usually a 'complete jumble' on his desk. From time to time during our talks, he would stroll into the composing room to give various instructions. The room smelled of printer's ink, and there were the familiar noises of a printing plant.

As a journalist, Mr K. was always in search of news, and travelled a lot by train. He possessed a good sense of humour, was a lover of poetry, and was accustomed to receiving books for review. From this it appears that Mrs M. was able to pick up in her mind the thoughts that crossed mine when I saw Mr K.'s photograph. In other words, when touching the portrait, she had the power to bring to mind what I was able to remember when seeing his picture.

The nature of telepathy now becomes apparent. It is the reception in one's mind of thoughts that emanate from another person's mind. It must be pointed out that the picture was no more than a prerequisite for my remembering all sorts of things about Mr K. The same can be said regarding the picture as an inductor to the psychometrist's 'upwelling' of thoughts that rise from within the mind, coming, as we might say, 'out of the blue'.

When we observe psychometrists during experiments and ask them about their ways of working, it appears that they usually get their impressions in the form of images coming to them or being 'forced' upon them: this is how the various thoughts connected with the object handed to them are experienced. These 'enforced' thoughts may be regarded as the forerunners of the 'veridical hallucinations' (hallucinations bearing a correspondence with reality, with actual fact) which occur to sensitives.

The 'enforced' thoughts underlie the veridical hallucinations and in certain circumstances they will turn up in them. Here a parallel can be drawn between what is observed in sensitives and what are known as the laws of memory. Research has shown that invariably, along with a clear graphic memory such as is found in people who are able to experience eidetic images (that is, to visualize objects and events), a nongraphic memory can also be discerned. There exists in sensitives a gradual transition from non-graphic ideation to graphic 'knowing', just as one can in general depict a gradual transition from non-graphic to graphic memorization.

The self-observations of our subjects show us that their 'hallucinations', just like eidetic images, can on occasions be exceptionally sharp and detailed. The veridical hallucinations of sensitives do not seem to be limited only to sight, and the same is true for the hallucinations of people with eidetic abilities.

A Flood of Tears

Psychometrists often show an inclination to compare themselves with those who have difficulty trying to recollect a forgotten word or name. If anyone tries to bring to mind such a 'missing' word he will often observe that, at first, names or words which have some kind of associative connection with the forgotten word seem to be 'thrust' upon him.

The same thing happens in psychometry, as is obvious from the following example pertaining to the well-known sensitive Gerard Croiset. One day he asked a student about his Oedipus complex: 'Have you an Oedipus complex or are you interested in it?' When the student denied his involvement, Croiset continued: 'And yet you have something to do with it.' The student again denied this. Then there was a moment of silence, during which Croiset seemed to wait for complementary impressions. Then he said: 'Now I see other pictures. Did you see a person this morning in a flood of tears that could not be stanched?' The student answered that he had seen that morning a patient in the eye hospital who had an excessive flow of tears. When we ask ourselves how Croiset came to talk about an Oedipus complex, it is not difficult to give an answer. Croiset's brother Max was a famous actor, who had many times played the principal character in *Oedipus Rex*. At the very moment that Oedipus plucks out both his eyes, pieces of red beet were put over the actor's eyes, causing a flood of tears. So, for Gerard Croiset, a flood of tears was associated with Oedipus and whatever was connected with this drama.

In Bits and Pieces

When we try to remember a name heard in the past, or an event which happened a long time ago, it can happen that this name or event suddenly 'stands before our eyes'. But it also can happen that such a name or event will return to us in bits and pieces. Every event is built up of a number of various elements. The same difficulty in getting a complete 'picture' can be observed in psychometrists. Often they will get only a few letters of a first or last name 'thrust onto' them in a paranormal way, or they very often 'see' only a few elements of the totality of events occurring in the past of people with whom they are in telepathic rapport.

In one psi experiment the subject, on being introduced to a lady unknown to him, suddenly 'saw' the image of a pair of long white gloves and long ear-rings. The sensitive told the lady that both images went together and had something to do with her, but he did not know what the connection was. She then explained that as a member of a theatrical group she had recently played a part in which she had to wear long white gloves and long ear-rings. For the second act she had to change costumes, and one evening one of the gloves got caught in an ear-ring. This agitated her a great deal especially since she had so little time before going on stage again.

Alternatively, events are thrust onto the subject complete, rather than in bits and pieces. If, for instance, I am asked in which year the Society for Psychical Research was founded, I will answer immediately 'in 1882', and at the same time recall a number of other facts connected with the Society. But how do I know that this date is correct? G.E.Muller, who contributed a great deal to the development of the psychology of memory, has pointed out certain signs which he called 'exactitude criteria' – standards by which the accuracy of memory may be gauged – and which together form the 'total exactitude-consciousness' or certainty about the thing remembered (in this case, the date).

These criteria include the exclusiveness and the persistency with which the reproduced fact or name is forced upon us. A very important exactitude-criterion is the 'fullness of ideas', by which is meant the fact that we are aware that these ideas which are forced upon us are connected with others. In the chosen example, for instance, not only was the year forced onto me but also the names of the founding members and the titles of works written by those pioneers.

In experiments with psychometrists it is very often found that the impressions they receive are coupled with a firm exactitude-consciousness. When we question them about how their minds work, and especially about this exactitude-consciousness, we find that we are dealing with the same criteria as the ones found in memory research.

A lowered state of consciousness, that causes the person to be less inhibited, is evidently favourable to psychometry. In observing psychometrists, their level of consciousness during the experiments is seen to be lowered totally or in part. In most cases this lower level is so slight that it can only be detected with special instruments. With a few subjects this lowering of the level of consciousness goes so far, however, that one may speak of trance and auto-hypnosis. The state of lessening of inhibition resulting from the autohypnosis enhances the flow of telepathically received impressions.

Through the Time Barrier

Experiments with psychometrists have shown that, not only are they not affected in their functioning by distance between experimenter and subject, but they can also break through the time barrier. Some of their experiences show that they are able to get impressions from persons they will meet – by chance – in the future.

In 1946 I developed a test which is known now as the chair experiment. This test consisted of two steps. First the subject (Gerard Croiset) gave a description of the characteristics and certain outstanding experiences of a person whom he expected to occupy a certain chair in a lecture hall. Next, often some weeks later, the person who by chance occupied this chair was questioned, to see to what degree Croiset's description fitted or deviated from the personality and experiences of this individual. These chair experiments were carried on for many years and in many parts of Europe.

Experiments in the Parapsychological Institute of the State University of Utrecht showed that some sensitives were able, under certain circumstances, to furnish data about lost persons, thefts and murders. This discovery raises the question of how far sensitives might use their gifts for practical purposes. However, it must be emphasized that to the science of parapsychology the question of whether ESP can have a practical application is only secondary. There are parapsychological 'hits' of tremendous theoretical value but with little practical implication.

The man in the street tends to think, incorrectly, that sensitives are able to see anything and everything. Nothing is further from the truth. Continual research has taught us that in nearly all such persons we find a more or less specialized interest determined in part by their own experiences. A psychoanalytical approach should, then, provide a knowledge of the urges which motivate them towards the direction of their interest. In my book on the use of sensitives (*Beschouwingen over het gebruik van paragnosten*) I reported the case of a sensitive who regarded it as almost his holy mission to detect thieves and succeeded repeatedly in doing so. Talks with this man showed that, when he was about 17, his father wrongly suspected him of having stolen some money. This suspicion caused quite a lot of difficulties for him which only stopped when his father received proof that his brother, who was always supposed to set an example, was guilty of the theft. The urge which this sensitive showed to solve thefts was clearly related to the psychical trauma which this suspicion had caused.

In contradistinction to the urge to see certain things, there exists also the urge not to see certain things. It is self-evident that this negative urge ought to interest the researcher just as much as the positive one: the more so because many of the blind spots that are considered to be shortcomings of the sensitives are closely linked to such negative urges.

The following case is a starting point. In October 1958, a Mrs A.B., who has often given evidence of psi abilities, was visited by a woman. In the course of the visit, Mrs A.B. spontaneously asked her visitor whether her father was possibly interested in the play *Gijsbrecht van Amstel*, as she got the impression that in some way or other he had something to do with this tragedy. On receiving a negative answer, Mrs A.B. did not pursue the matter further.

On 17 January 1960 the visitor's father died. The family inserted the announcement of his death in the newspaper *Tubantia* the following day and Mrs A.B.'s visitor signed the announcement. Under this insertion, at a distance of about 6 inches, there was an advertisement of a forthcoming performance of the tragedy *Gijsbrecht van Amstel*. Because both announcements were coincidentally associated in space as well as in time, and both were read by the visitor, we may accept that we have here a case of a so-called 'displacement' or substitution based on 'defence' mechanism which certainly originated in a repression.

A Childhood Guilt

Some years ago I came into contact with a 23-year-old student who was gifted with psi abilities to some degree. A series of psychometric experiments followed which on the whole produced satisfying results. One day, when I handed him a cap to be used as an inductor, the subject told me that this object gave him a very unpleasant feeling. The cap, which had been made available by the police, belonged to a man sought in connection with the murder of the new-born child of his unmarried daughter. The student told me that he felt terrified. Suddenly he threw the inductor away, stating that he did not get any impressions.

Some days later, although I had not given him any information about the origin of this object, the test subject asked me whether it had something to do with the murder of a new-born child. When I asked him why he put this question, he told me that he had had a dream about a man who had put a newborn child under a heap of pillows. At that point I could only reply that this 'picture' was correct.

Afterwards a conversation followed about 'displacements' in time as observed by Whately Carington, S. G. Soal and others. Suddenly the subject exclaimed: 'Now I know why I did not get any impressions a few days ago.' He began to talk in detail about an event in his childhood. His mother gave birth to a second child and gave so much care and attention to the new baby that it aroused feelings of hate and repugnance in him. One day, an aunt who happened to visit them saw him deliberately throwing bricks into the cradle: his aunt consequently gave him a sound spanking.

Chris Barker

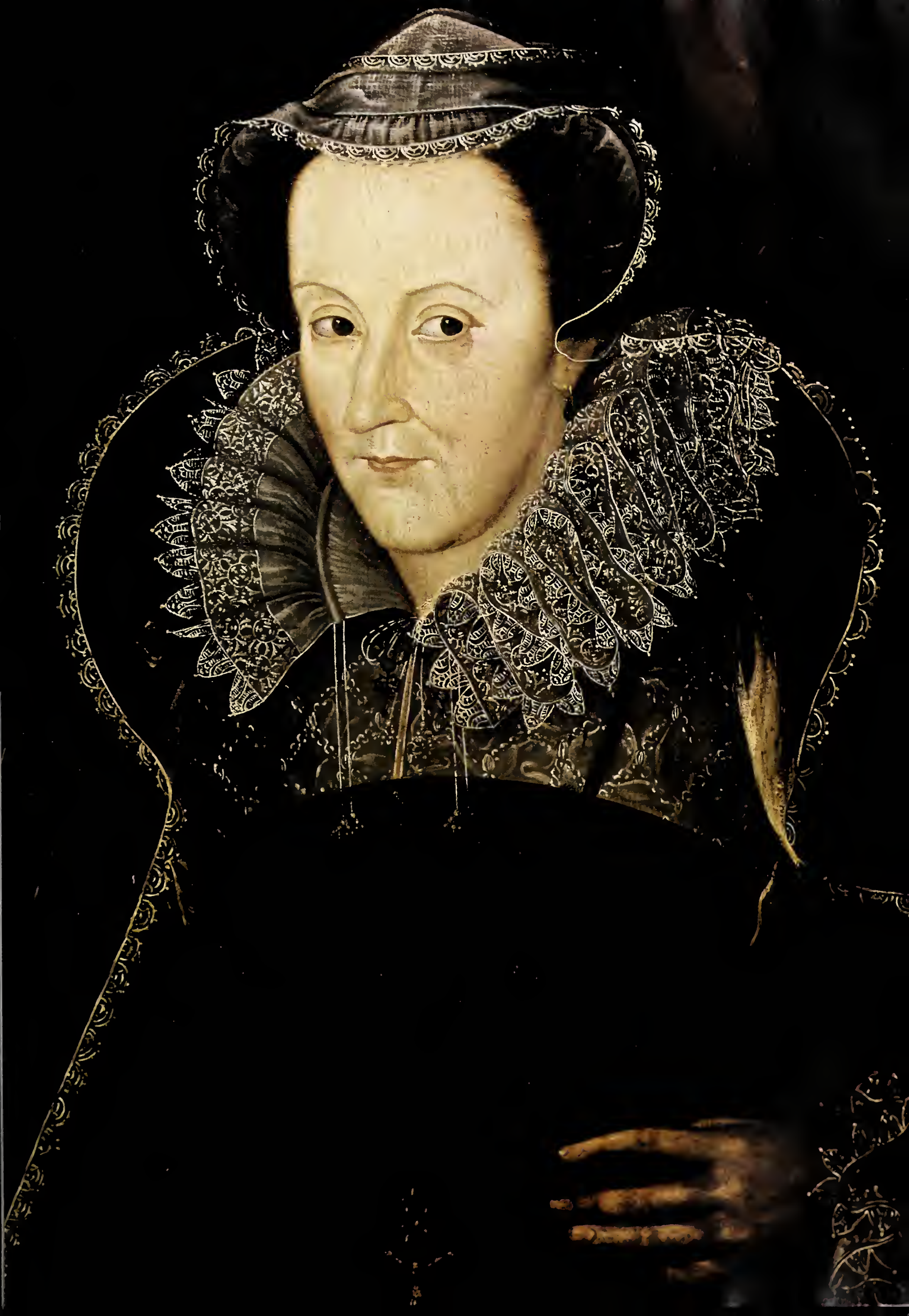
The brooch (*above*) is said to have belonged to the ill-fated Mary Queen of Scots (*right*). A 'sensitive' may provide accurate information about the owner of an object, and experiments suggest that in some cases the explanation is telepathy from the mind of an investigator who knows the object's history

When I asked him if he could find any connection between this experience of his youth and his not being able to tell anything about the inductor (that is, the cap) given to him a few days previously, the subject answered: 'It's quite clear. Unwittingly I identified myself with the murderer of the child. Something within me told me: "You might have done the same thing: you are capable of doing something like that". Therefore I did not want to see it.'

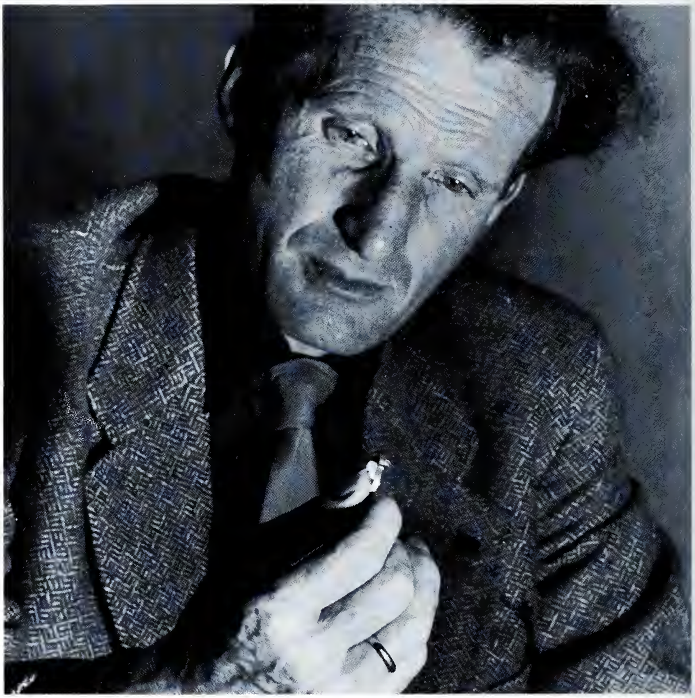
When he was asked if he could account for his anxiety when he took the inductor in his hand, the subject answered without hesitation that he was sure that this anxiety must have resulted from a deep repression. 'Evidently, I knew at once when you handed me the inductor that this had to do with the murderer of a child. Because I identified myself with the murderer, however, I must immediately have repressed these impressions, which caused anxiety. During my sleep, when censorship was weakened, the story loomed up in me.'

Condensing Space and Time

In the dreams and hallucinations of sensitives the phenomenon of condensation or compression has also frequently been noticed. The following is an interesting case of such condensation. It concerns a sensitive, W. Tholen, who, like Gerard Croiset, succeeded innumerable times in supplying details by telephone about missing persons, animals and objects. In August 1964 he was consulted on the telephone by a doctor, unknown to him, whose wife had mislaid three trinkets. Mr Tholen gave a description



The famous Dutch sensitive Gerard Croiset holds a ring during an object reading session. He, and later his son, helped to trace missing objects and persons, and assisted police investigations of thefts and murders



Leif Geiges

of an antique cupboard which was supposedly in the consultant's home. He 'saw' the missing objects in this cupboard. Since the doctor did not possess such a cupboard he paid no further attention to the sensitive's words. Subsequently he found the three trinkets, but in three different cupboards. He then realized that the sensitive had amalgamated elements of these three cupboards and visualized an entirely new piece of furniture.

Similar compressions and condensations have been recorded in which situations, both from the past and from the future, blend with situations from the present into a new and at first unrecognizable whole. Croiset, for instance, when asked to indicate where a missing person might be found, described a stretch of river where ships were moored. The ships were at that time no longer there but had been moored there some days previously. It was the place where the missing person had drowned, and Croiset had wanted to indicate where to look.

W.H.C.TENHAEFF

FURTHER READING: J. H. Pollack, *Croiset the Clairvoyant* (Doubleday, 1964); W.H.C. Tenhaeff, *Telepathy and Clairvoyance* (Charles C. Thomas, 1972).

PSYCHOTRONICS

ORIGINALLY PROPOSED by researchers in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s as a term to replace 'parapsychology', and described as 'the bionics of man', psychotronics has developed as an interdisciplinary study of the interaction of matter, energy and consciousness. It predicates the existence of psychotronic energy, a vital force that could be the source of all psychic phenomena.

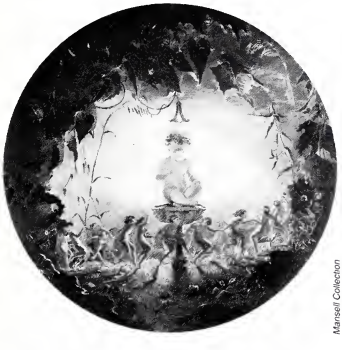
Contemporary with the coining of the term, Robert Pavlita, a Czech inventor and design director for a textile works, made public a range of small devices which he claimed to have spent over thirty years developing, and which he called psychotronic generators. Made in metal or wood, and frequently resembling the 'ritual objects' exhibited in museums, they were said to accumulate energy from any suitable biological – particularly human – source, which could then be used for a variety of purposes, such as enhancing plant growth or purifying polluted water.

On film, the generators were shown attracting non-magnetic materials, even under water, causing a rotor blade to turn at a distance, and exhibiting other effects comparable to psychokinesis. A panel of scientists declared that 'experiments have excluded any conceivable physical agent – even heat'.

In the US, a psychotronic generator was developed in 1970 by Woodrow W. Ward. He gave it the name 'psionic generator', and claimed that it was activated directly when it was stared at; he said that it was more sensitive to children, and that it was more quickly activated during certain planetary aspects or phases of the moon.

The International Association for Psychotronic Research held its first congress in Prague in 1973, and the United States Psychotronics Association was founded in Chicago in 1975.

(See also PSYCHOMETRY; PYRAMIDOLOGY.)



Mansell Collection

PUCK

SHAKESPEARE'S PUCK in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the best-known literary reference to this character from folklore. Shakespeare and his contemporaries were faithful to folk tradition in their treatment of Puck, and his double, Robin Goodfellow, but at the same time the name has certainly a wider range and more various connotations. Shakespeare's Puck was a jester and personal attendant to King Oberon, in just the same way as the poet Drayton's Puck was in his fairy tale *Nymphidia*. This aspect of Puck may perhaps be a sideline to true folk tradition, but he had retained his tricksy character; he was a shape-shifter and misleader like any other hobgoblin. He could turn into a three-legged stool or a roasted crab-apple just as easily as into a filly foal or a Will-o'-the-Wisp. He laughed at mortals and teased them, but he was not incapable of compassion or kindness, and had his own moral standards; and although he delighted in mischief, he was definitely not malevolent.

We hear of one brownie-like task performed by Shakespeare's Puck; he some times 'laboured in the quern', that is helped to grind malt and meal. On the other hand he played tricks with the churning. 'Puck' and 'Robin Goodfellow' seem to be names indifferently used for the same spirit, and it is difficult to differentiate between them, though on the whole rather more domestic tasks are ascribed to Robin Goodfellow. Both are commonly used as personal names, though occasionally we have 'pucks' spoken of in the plural. The generic term is usually hobgoblin for a spirit more friendly than the sinister goblins.

Puck and Robin Goodfellow, like all of their kind, played Will-o'-the-Wisp tricks to mislead travellers. 'Pouk-ledden' is the Midland dialect term for going inexplicably astray, and we still occasionally hear personal anecdotes of puck-leading.

In a 17th-century pamphlet, *The Life of Robin Goodfellow* (1628), Robin Goodfellow is described as half-human, the child of a mortal maidservant and a fairy king. His father acknowledged him, granted his wishes and gave him the power of shapeshifting. This power is characteristic of all hobgoblins, the Hedley Kow, the Picktree Brag, the Dunny, Shagfoal and so on (see FAIRIES).

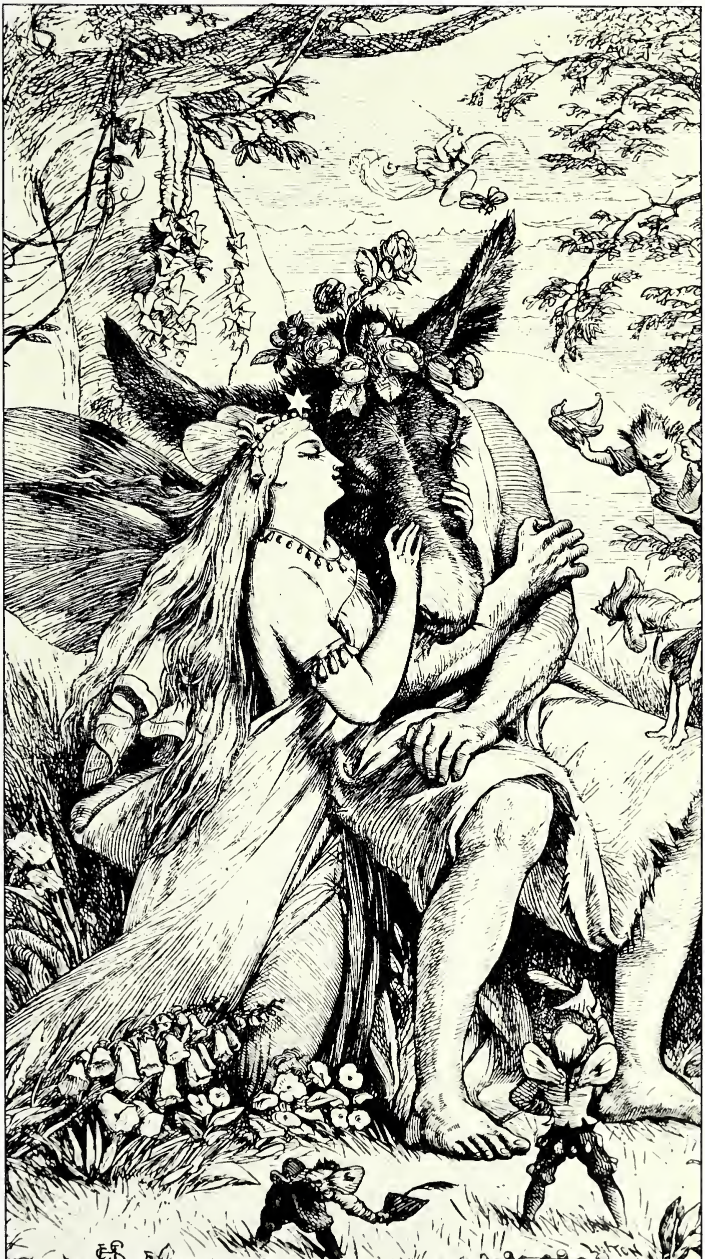
The name Puck, however, has a broader base than a single person among the fairies. There are many variants of it: the Welsh pwca, the Irish Phouka, the West Country pixies, Pug, used for small devils, and closely related to it are the Scottish buckie, the Highland bucans, bug-a-boos, boggarts, bogies and bugs, many of them more frightening creatures than Puck. Robin Goodfellow has also a fair number of variants: Robin Roundcap, possibly Robin Hood, hobs, lobs, hobgoblins, Hobthrush.

The Puritans generally held Puck, Robin Goodfellow and all other hobgoblins to be plain devils, but the ordinary countryman, though he thought them mischievous and occasionally formidable, believed that they were kindly disposed to humans, and they were on the whole beloved. There seems evidence from scattered references in the drama that Robin Goodfellow was a popular character in the Mummers' Play. His costume was a calfskin, and he carried a broom, as Shakespeare's Puck did, to sweep the dust behind the door. The clearest evidence of this is in Ben Jonson's masque *Love Restored*, when Robin Goodfellow comes in with his broom and his candles and announces himself as part of the device. There are indications also in less well-known plays, such as *Fortunatus*, *Grim the Collier of Croydon* and *Wily Beguilde*. In the crude illustrations to the pamphlets both Puck and Robin Goodfellow are generally horned, with goats' feet and legs.

His part in these ceremonial plays, the widespread linguistic resemblances and the association he was held to have with the Devil, all suggest that he was a minor god or fertility spirit, who continued to hold his place in men's hearts when his origin had been forgotten.

K.M.BRIGGS

FURTHER READING: K.M.Briggs, *The Anatomy of Puck* (Arno, 1977).


Titania. Out of this wood do not desire to go:
Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.
I am a spirit of no common rate.
Act III. Scene I.

Mansell Collection

It is in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that Puck makes his most famous literary appearance *Facing page* 'Puck and the Fairies', by Richard Dadd *Right* Titania, under a spell cast by Puck, falls helplessly in love with Bottom the weaver, who has been partially transformed into an ass

PUEBLO INDIANS

/Susan Griggs

Pueblo life is rich in ceremonial that intrudes into almost every action of life. If the rites are performed correctly, no ill-fortune can penetrate their field of force, for ritual 'automatically sets the gods to work, automatically taps the animistic power of things'

PUEBLO INDIANS

OF ALL American Indians north of the Rio Grande, the Pueblo developed the most impressive civilization. Their culture had matured some time before the Spanish arrived to give them the name we now use (Pueblo means 'village'); and it remained at those heights in spite of later white incursions and ever-shrinking reservations. Indeed, much of the admirable culture of other south-western tribes – the Navaho especially – was borrowed from the Pueblo.

The conquistadors found the Pueblo to be agriculturally skilled, expert in crafts like pottery and weaving, and above all great builders in adobe mud and timber. They erected towering structures of many storeys – the first 'high-rise' apartment buildings in the New World. And so their houses, and the family units within them, came to be a main focal point for Pueblo life – if that sophisticated and highly intricate interweaving of activity can be said to have had a focal point.

All an outsider can do is sort out a few threads of that complex pattern, as it fans out from the centre of the individual home. For instance, Pueblo society is matrilineal, structured in terms of descent through the female line. Women hold an unusually important position in society: they own the houses, newlyweds move in with the bride's mother, and the men work in the fields – something unheard of among male-dominated Indian nations.

The unit of the village, a clutch of adobe houses, forms another pivot round which an individual's life revolves. Once there were hundreds of villages, now there are only 25 (in north-west New Mexico and north-east Arizona). The villages cluster together in accordance with tribal links – for there are five separate tribes of Pueblo Indians: Hopi, Zuni, Keres, Tiwa and Tewa.

Other social organizations cut across the family-village-tribe ties, and with these we approach the incredibly complex structure of Pueblo religion. As with many other comparatively simple societies, religious belief and practice infuses every detail of ordinary existence. When a tourist once asked a Pueblo man what his religion was, the Indian replied, 'Life'. He was not being grandiose: he merely saw no separation between religious activity and any other kind. So, while there are special religious groups cutting across the village or tribal boundaries, there are also groups with definite social functions which blend indivisibly with those of religion.

These social groups are the clans. Membership is supposedly determined by inheritance (that is, which clan one's parents belonged to) but, in fact, this common ancestry is largely symbolic: adoption is perfectly in order, even sometimes of non-Pueblo Indians. A clan will have a common name, special religious totems (animals or plants), special insignia and secret words, and specific tribal duties which mainly involve playing a traditional role in specific tribal ceremonies, separate from individual clan ceremonies.

Other rituals are looked after by several specialized religious cult groups, operating in connection with the village ceremonial centre, the *kiva* – a highly symbolic gathering place for ritual activity. Within the cults, again, there are often several 'medicine societies', smaller secret organizations even more highly specialized, with their own unique rituals, fetishes and kivas.

The cult of the *kachina* dancers comes in for much attention, probably because the gorgeous masks and symbolic kachina dolls have been more accessible to anthropologists and tourists than other more secret cult elements. The kachinas impersonate

Previous page **Plumed arms outstretched and bells jingling, the Eagle Dancers of Santa Clara perform at an annual ceremony in July; eagles were kept for a year by Pueblo families and then killed and sent to carry messages to the gods *Below* Acoma-Pueblo, 'Sky City': the Pueblo people developed the most impressive of American Indian civilizations and constructed the first 'high-rise' apartment buildings in the New World *Right* Burning the effigy of 'Old Mother Gloom' on the first night of Labour Day celebrations at Santa Fé**

Adam Woolfitt/Susan Griggs

Adam Wolfitt/Susan Griggs

Religious belief and practice infuses every aspect of Pueblo life; through ceremony and ritual the gods are summoned to exercise their powers on human behalf *Above left* Ceremonial dress of a Pueblo at the Corn Dance Festival, at Taos, New Mexico *Above right* Children attending the Corn Dance Festival

supernatural beings (and the impersonation can reach the level of full ritual possession); ritually disguised, they are important to many tribal ceremonies. Zuni cult members can 'dance kachina' to reinforce, say, the disease-curing cult; Hopi kachinas turn out to lead the worship at ceremonial times of year, such as at the solstices.

The Pueblo also have a delightful group of secret societies whose members are holy Fools. They perform clowning antics on ceremonial occasions, as a kind of parody of the kachinas, rich in blasphemy and violent farce. Their costumes are grotesque, their dances are involved ritual satires, they eat filth and bellow obscenities. And, it seems, they perform a much-needed function of providing comic relief from the emotional tensions that build up during a nerve-racking ceremony with all its meticulous attention to detail. They also help to purge the undeniable aggressions and tensions that must develop within the whole rigidly organized and tradition-bound Pueblo society (see FOOL).

Sun Father and Corn Mother

With all this concern for rich helpings of ceremonial, it would be expected that the ceremonies are performed almost for their own sake – not as empty rituals, certainly, yet not entirely as open-ended acts of devotion. That is, the gods and spirits do not rule, do not gaze down continually to ensure that religious and moral laws are observed. The supernatural beings seem to keep to themselves, until specifically summoned by a ceremony to exercise their power on human behalf. And if they are called properly, if the rites are performed correctly, the spirits cannot refuse to respond.

The spirits themselves occur in large quantities, often in vaguely defined and overlapping groups. The Cloud Beings are prominent, and have criss-crossing ties among various cults and societies, most obviously among the rain-makers. Other spirit groups include the Corn Maidens, the Star Spirits and Dawn Spirits, the rain-bringing Lightning (or Storm) gods who are related to the Cloud Beings.

Out of this welter of supernaturals crowded into the Pueblo environment, a few figures can be separated out as important single deities. Sun Father or Sun Old Man seems to be paramount among the Zuni; Moon and Morning Star are both High Gods (Moon is female to some Pueblo, but male to Hopi and Tewa); Corn Mother holds a dominant position among the Keres. The archetypal Twin Heroes appear among the Zuni as War Brothers, giving power to warrior societies and featuring in hero and trickster myths. Their grandmother, Spider Old Woman, is a powerful deity although she is identified with an actual creature; her power flows towards war, but in myth she is a benevolent healer and intercessor. The ubiquitous trickster Coyote also appears as an intercessor, aiding human development and, like Prometheus, bringing fire. Water Serpent, another individual animal god, is connected with flood and other watery disasters, and also in myth with fertility and sexuality.

The Indians have their share of animistic belief, attributing supernatural power to anything and everything. Stones, mountains, rivers and the like have power; they either have humanized spirits associated with them, or are 'containers' of magical power that can be tapped.

Ancestral worship, or something very like it, occurs as well: the deceased chiefs of cults and medicine societies join the Cloud People and take on supernatural aspects; enemy dead killed in war and scalped are transformed (by a scalp ceremony) into rain-making spirits; for the Hopi, just about all the tribe's dead become Cloud People. Sometimes it is said that wicked Indians will undergo punishment after death: dead witches become mere smoke, without substance, unable to join the Cloud People.

Both ghosts and witches are taken seriously by the Pueblo. Ghosts return if burial rituals are neglected, and their return (even in dreams) brings ill-fortune and omens of death. Sometimes a neglected ghost who has been sufficiently angered will attack the living; and witches too attack ordinary folk, bringing disease or death upon them. Then the curing societies (or often the warrior societies, who police the Pueblo) go into action to counteract the malediction.

Many rituals are designed to prevent hauntings and witchery, or as curatives if the malefics get past the magical barriers. But again the intrinsic power of the ceremonial magic is apparent. If the rites are performed correctly, no kind of ill-fortune, natural or supernatural, can penetrate their force field. So we come back to the idea of ceremonial that automatically sets the gods to work, automatically taps the animistic power of things, automatically puts up the witch or ghost repellents.

Enormous numbers of ceremonies are attached to household affairs: building the house, acquiring new members of the family, receiving visitors. Whole villages turn out to perform rituals for collective activities – planting, harvesting, hunting, kiva building, road-making. Society chiefs are ceremonially installed and new members ceremonially initiated. Weather control of various kinds, and not only rain-making, demands ceremony; so do requests for better crops, more domestic animals, more babies, more prosperity. Kachina dances occur as parts of other ceremonies, or erupt on their own as special cult or clan rites.

Ritual magic is also projected into many everyday objects. Corn and corn meal, pollen, tobacco, stones and shells can be thus transformed, often as offerings to gods. Ashes protect against witchcraft, as do arrow-heads. Special beads and pigments have great power, and many of these things are used to enhance the power of the splendidly decorated prayer sticks that serve as offerings, or bearers of ritual addresses to the gods. Prayer feathers in particular may decorate the sticks, but can be used alone, perhaps worn in the hair. The sticks are carried by ritual dancers, by travellers, by cult chiefs, or are planted in sacred places.

The Shalako Festival

Pueblo ceremonial also employs powerful sticks of office, as rich in magic as a medieval monarch's sceptre. The dolls of the kachina dancers are images of someone's desire (like a figurine of a baby for a barren woman): the positive side of the black witch's wax image. Ears of corn with unusual shapes are highly-prized fetishes that accompany the dead, guard the newborn, protect cult initiates and more. Unusual stones or shells may be kept for generations as cult fetishes: petrified wood for a Keres warrior society, abalone shell for a Zuni kachina society. Complicated masks are vital in most grand ceremonials, especially for the kachina impersonation of spirits.

This is a small selection of the artefacts of Pueblo ceremonial. Still, all these objects and materials are merely, as it were, stage properties. Equally vital within a ceremony is the intricate stage management and

Kachina dancers impersonate supernatural beings in full ceremonial disguise; kachina dolls, which have been carved from cottonwood, are given to children in order to help them recognize their own tribal gods

C M. Dixon

production of the various activities. One example is the fantastically complex and lengthy ceremonial festival of the Zuni, called 'Shalako'.

It is a hunt ceremony, relating to war, fertility and longevity as well. It also has something in common with the European All Souls ceremony for the dead. It begins soon after the winter solstice, when the paramount chiefs select the organizers and main participants (the impersonators). These people go immediately into rehearsal which, accompanied by regular ritual offerings and the like, goes on for months. The actors meet nightly, for arduous practice, throughout that period.

By early October the pace increases. Prayer sticks have been planted regularly during the intervening time, with accompanying song and ritual. Now the impersonators receive a string tied with 49 knots, one to be untied every morning. When the 40th knot is freed, the holy Fools (*koyemshi*) appear; masked, painted, joking; they pass through a ritual involving corn meal, then go into an eight-day purificatory retreat. More small-scale rituals, preparation of sacred objects and so on fill those days; fires are lit on the fourth day and lengthy prayer songs intoned. On the eighth day the masked Shalako impersonators and the local kachina dancers go into action, visiting specified houses (usually new ones, chosen for dedication) and 'blessing' them with ritual involving meal, seeds and prayer sticks.

The owners of the houses 'entertain' the kachina, and listen to a litany chant that lasts for about six hours; and the Shalako impersonators offer their own two-hour chant. A feast follows, and offerings to the dead, who are now believed to have returned, are made. The kachina then dance for the rest of the night (and sometimes the night's entertaining also includes heavy drinking and uninhibited sex). The koyemshi make the rounds of the houses, until at dawn the kachina are washed and fed and plied with gifts, and the last knot of the tally string is ceremonially untied – on a house roof, facing the sunrise.

Then the Shalako impersonators gather to race over the fields to a prepared place where they must gather up prayer sticks. They are pursued by other men: if a Shalako falls while running, ill-fortune accompanies the rite, and must later be driven out by an exorcizing flagellation. The pursuers try to strike the runners, symbolic of a hunter's kill, magically ensuring successful hunting all year. For the rest of that day, the Koyemshi move from roof to roof of the ceremonial houses, never touching the ground.

The four days that follow are filled with dancing: the kiva groups dance, the koyemshi cavort, the kachina exhaust themselves. On the last night of dancing, the koyemshi eat a ritual meal, then begin a sleepless fast (which, if broken, brings disaster to next year's crops). The next morning they play a central role in an involved ceremony where dancing interweaves with special sprinkling of meal and burial of sacred objects. At the end the Koyemshi, naked, are cleansed of their body paint by the women of the ceremonial houses, and are given gifts.

On the last day of the Shalako ceremony, all the dance groups perform exceedingly complex dances in strict accordance with tradition. Then many sacred objects including the ceremonial prayer sticks are taken (usually by the koyemshi) to the river, where they are consecrated for the dead.

In this brief space it has been possible only to give a generalized and simplified notion of the main constituents to be found in the social-ceremonial structure of the Pueblo Indians. Innumerable variations exist, from town to town and from tribe to tribe. This is not a full account, or anything like one, but more like an arch or two out of a Gothic cathedral, or a few patterned shapes from the Bayeux Tapestry. They can offer only an oblique glimmering of the richness, the density, the unimaginable intricacy, and the superbly harmonized unity of the whole. (See also TOTEM.)

DOUGLAS HILL

FURTHER READING: Elsie C. Parsons, *Pueblo Indian Religion* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1939); H. Tyler, *Pueblo Birds and Myths* (Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1979); Ruth M. Underhill, *Red Man's Religion* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1972); F. Waters, *Masked Gods*, (Ohio Univ. Press, 1950).

Stone tool rock-carving from New Mexico dated from between 900 to 1400 AD; only 25 Pueblo villages, clustered in tribal groups, remain from the hundreds that once existed

Keystone

Punch and Judy

Traditional puppet-show; Punch, with humped back, hooked nose and nightcap, is a mischievous bully who kills his baby, beats Judy, his wife, to death and tricks the policeman, the hangman, a dog, Death, the Devil and other characters; Punch is an abbreviation of Punchinello, a character in 17th century Italian comedy.

The ancient tombs of Westminster Abbey were originally placed there in the belief that the prayers of the living helped the dead to be purged of sin in purgatory

PURGATORY

THAT THE SANCTIONS for unjust and immoral conduct which can be imposed in this life are inadequate might occur to any thinking man. What form the penalties of another life might take would be a matter for guesswork, but that there should be some penalty seems reasonable to many who believe in the immortality of the soul (see IMMORTALITY) and who accept purgatory as a condition or place of spiritual cleansing for the dead. That there should be a restoration of the human soul to a lost integrity, where that is possible, also seems reasonable. In the *Aeneid* Virgil pictured a threefold purgation of souls that were too earthy, the elements of fire, water and air being called upon to do the work; some were seared with fire, others hung out as on a clothes-line to suffer the action of the air, and a third sort churned in a vast whirlpool. Virgil was governed by the Stoic idea that this process lasted for 1000 years and that then the life of the world began anew.

The Pythagoreans, with whose views Virgil was not unfamiliar, held that the soul at death passed upwards through the air, then through the waters above the air and finally through the atmosphere warmed by the sun, until it was deposited in the Isles of the Blest. This passage through air, water and solar radiation was looked upon as the purgation of the soul. Once in the Isles of the Blest it might be left for a time and then escorted to a still higher Elysium, or alternatively it might be sent down to join another body on earth (see REINCARNATION). The Isles of the Blest were located in the moon and disembarkation there was considered to be endangered by certain 'customs officers' who might rob the soul of its assets. Ritual acts

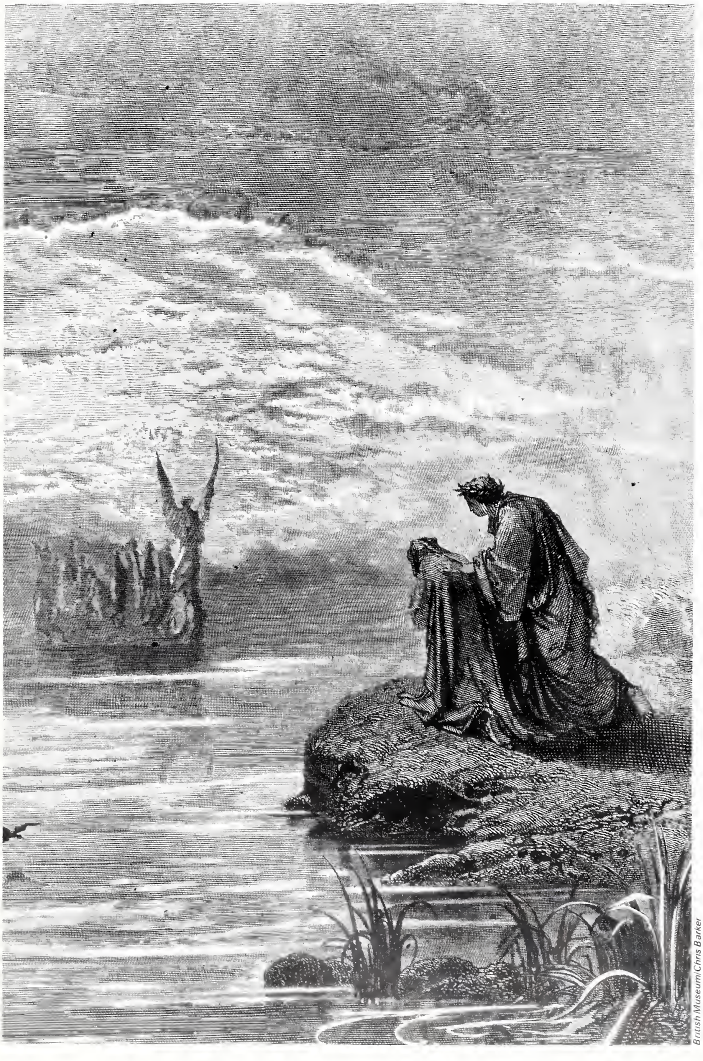
There are traces in pre-Christian pagan belief of 'a condition or place of spiritual cleansing for the dead'; at the Roman Catholic Xaghra Shrine, Malta, a statue flanked by torches over the archway symbolizes purgatory

C M D

performed while on earth might be a guarantee that the soul would escape harm from these searchers.

Towards the end of Old Testament times, Jewish belief was centred on prayer and sacrifice for the dead in such cases where hope for the remission of their sins might be entertained. The famous incident of Judas Maccabeus set the pattern; after a victory he had found that some of his dead warriors had pagan amulets under their tunics. They had died nobly for the liberty of their Jewish faith, but they had also offended God by superstition or else by greed. Judas directed that sacrifice should be offered for them at Jerusalem that they might be set free from their sins (2 Maccabees, chapter 12). The book of Enoch (22.12) holds out a prospect that sinners who are themselves sinned against will not stay for ever in Gehenna with those sinners who have no such asset.

The coming of Christianity meant that the two books of Maccabees were taken over as part of the scriptures of the Church and the incident there reported was valued as precedent. Prayer for the dead (as distinct from prayer to those who had died by martyrdom) was a Christian practice from the beginning. The mention of 'the house of Onesiphorus' (2 Timothy, chapter 1) in a context where the past good works of its head are commemorated, implies that this Onesiphorus was already dead and is being commended to mercy. Inscriptions of the 2nd century ask the passer-by to intercede for the soul of the dead person who is named.



British Museum/Chris Barker

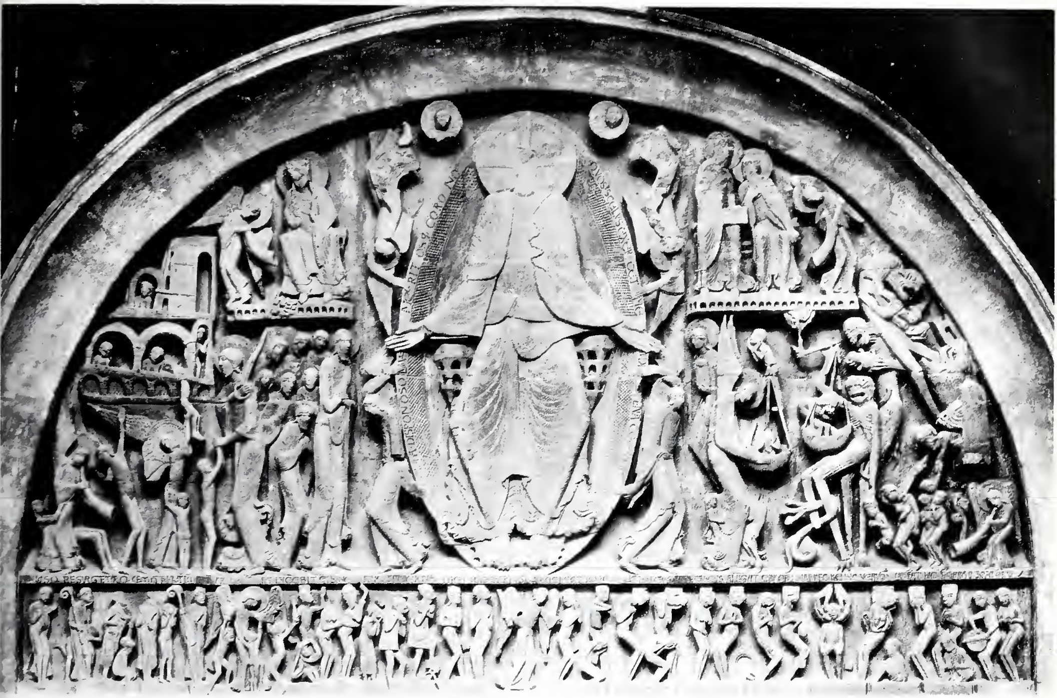
St Paul himself once indicated that he held the same belief. In 1 Corinthians (chapter 3) he speaks of the varying work of evangelists; some are good builders, others run up a shack with anything that is to hand. When a fire sweeps through the town, the good building of stone will stand, but the shack will burn, and its occupant may only just manage to get out, 'being saved as it were through the fire'. The careful evangelist is rewarded; the careless one is saved, but only just. This is an allegory of heaven and purgatory, though not a direct formal pronouncement of belief. The saying in the gospel of St Luke (12.59) about the officer of the law putting in ward the evil-doer and keeping him there till he pay the last farthing was likewise taken as an indirect way of describing the fate after death of the soul whose sin was not irremediable.

The Keys of Pardon

While urging prayer for the dead, the Church was also teaching that there were certain capital sins which, if they were not forgiven in this world, could never be pardoned. Thus the category of what came to be called venial sins (those which could be pardoned) was established, and the conclusion was reached that it was these which the living by their prayers could cause to be remitted for their dead friends. Not without a purpose did the Church at Rome substitute a feast of the *Cathedra* of St Peter for the pagan festival of the *cara cognatio* on 22 February. On that day pagan Roman families celebrated the memory of their departed relatives by setting out food for their spirits. Christians were reminded by the Petrine feast that the keys of pardon had been assumed by St Peter when he was set to guard the gates of heaven.

Infiltrations of pagan practice troubled the Christian Church from time to time, and a Gallican Church council at Tours in 567 had to forbid the practice of putting out food for the spirits of the dead on this feast. Origen included in his writings the figures of the evil 'customs officials' who wait on the boundary of the world to despoil the dead of their hard-won merits. Origen also pictured Christ as standing like another John the Baptist by the side of a river of fire, baptizing in fire those who came forward to cross the river. In a Christian poem by Commodian (c 250 AD) the myth is introduced of the lost tribes of Israel living in tranquillity across the river of Persia, with toil and death but with no disease and no sin, awaiting the end of the world.

One notable difference between Christian practice and other religions was that monarchs and other famous men sought to be buried within Christian churches, so that they might benefit after death from their being remembered by the priests praying at the altars. The Emperor Constantine set this fashion in 337, soon after the building of the first great basilicas; and the tombs in Westminster Abbey are originally due to the same motive. The



Hamlyn Group Library

The souls of those who were not already damned beyond redemption went to purgatory; there expiation was made for past sins in the hope of acquittal at the Last Judgement *Above* 12th century relief of the Last Judgement from Autun Cathedral *Left* Illustration to Dante's *Purgatorio* by Gustave Doré: Dante bows before the angel who pilots dead souls to purgatory

prayers in the liturgy, as witnessed by the oldest of the Sacramentaries, correspond with this idea, asking for 'purgation after death' for the departed faithful. The nature of this purgation was much debated.

The institution of a system of public penance by the Church was more exactly carried out in the West, with its juridical background of Roman law, than in the East. The Western belief that a penitent who was admitted to Communion on his death-bed could work off the remainder of his public penance in purgatory was not so clearly understood in the East. At the Council of Florence (1439) the Greeks readily accepted the lawfulness of praying for the dead. After discussion they also agreed on a formulation of the expiatory character of purgatory for penitents who had not carried out their full penance. Soon after this the Western mystic St Catherine of Genoa (1447–1510) gave a new direction to theological thought by her account of her mystic experiences. She claimed that those in purgatory rejoiced at their growing awareness of the removal of all obstacles to their future union with God. Having passed beyond their period of free will they could no longer sin, and hence could not grudge the happiness of those who departed from purgatory before themselves; neither could they gloat over the thought of leaving before others, as in an earthly prison.

Circle of Envy

My master said: 'This circle castigates
The sin of envy . . .'

I do not think that there exists on earth
Even at the present day, a man so hard
That he would not be moved by what I saw.
For when I had drawn near enough to them
So that their actions were made clear to me,
I grieved so, that the tears sprang from my eyes.
Their clothing seemed to be of coarsest
haircloth;
One leaned upon the shoulder of another,
And all of them were leaning on the bank.
Thus do the blind who beg their daily bread
Take station in the churches of indulgence . . .
And as the sun doth not avail the blind,
So to those spirits whom I have described,
The light of heaven hath here denied its
blessing:
For through their eyelids runs an iron wire,
Sewing them shut – as it is often done
To a wild falconet, to keep him quiet.
It seemed to me that I was doing wrong
To stare at others, while unseen myself . . .

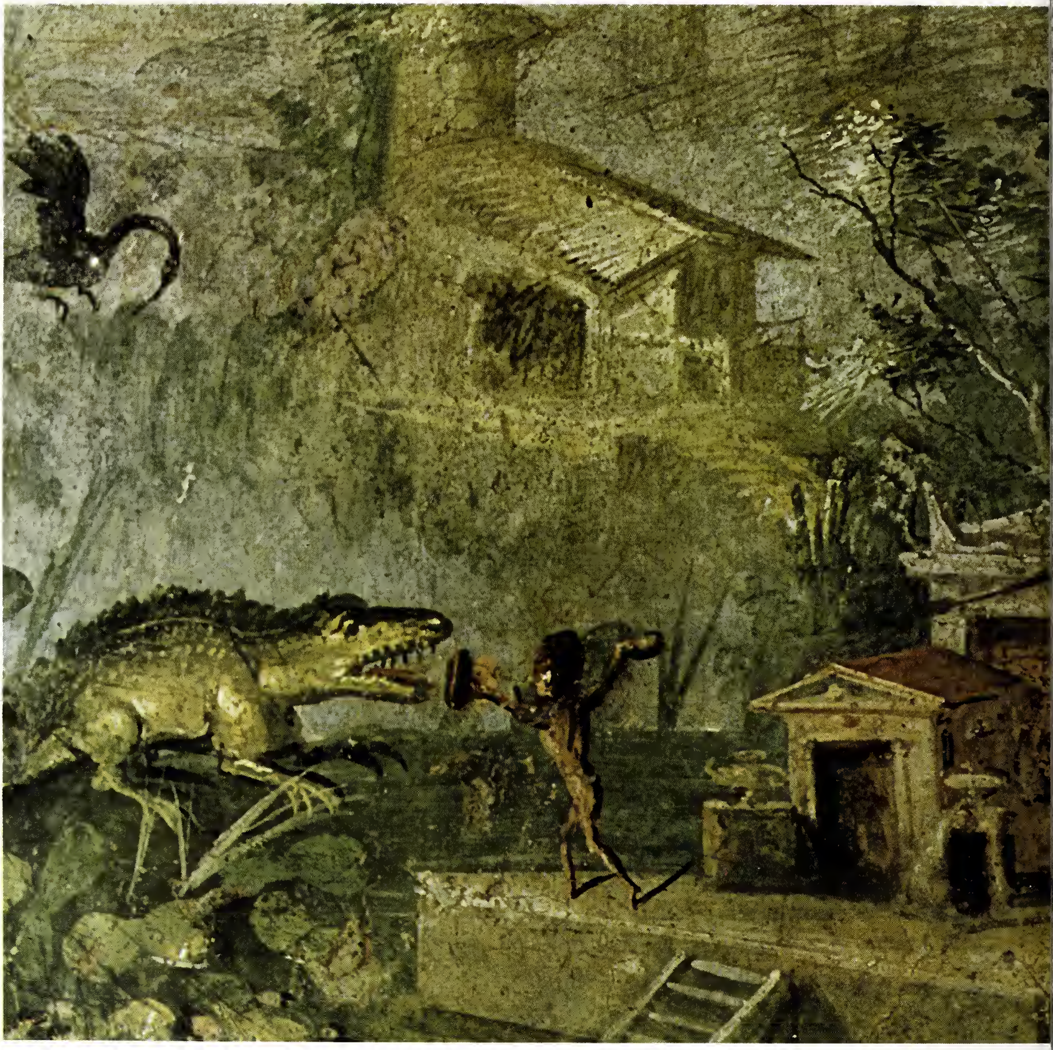
Dante *Purgatorio* (trans. L. G. White)

The *Purgatorio* of Dante (see DANTE) is a seven-storey mountain where the expiation goes on of what was due to the seven capital sins which a man may have repented of before death. Dante uses purgatory to read a lesson to those still alive who incline to the capital vices, very much as Chaucer's Wife of Bath said of her dead husband: 'On earth, I was his Purgatory'. St Patrick's Purgatory, the Irish penitential sanctuary on Lough Derg, became famous before Dante's time and indeed influenced him. The short and sharp penance done there was held to mitigate enormously what might await the sinner in the next life. The other great work of literature inspired by purgatory, Cardinal Newman's *Dream of Gerontius*, has through Elgar's music brought the idea of purgatory once more into the awareness of the English-speaking world from which it had so largely faded at the Reformation. The medieval painting of a weighing of souls, still to be seen in the church at Catherington in Hampshire, may owe its form to the classical picture of Hermes weighing Achilles against Memnon, but here the hand of the Virgin Mary has adjusted the arm of the balance to the advantage of the soul that is being weighed against his sins. There is a mildness about Christianity which paganism did not dare to envisage.

(See also HELL; JUDGEMENT.)

J. H. CREHAN

FURTHER READING: Franz Cumont, *Afterlife in Roman Paganism* (Yale Univ. Press, 1922); Shane Leslie, *St Patrick's Purgatory* (Burns, Oates, 1932); J. Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (Chicago 1984); F. X. Shouppe, *Purgatory*, (TAN Books, 1973).



The pygmies have been described as 'the happiest people on earth'; untroubled by superstitious fears they live harmoniously, devoting their energies to the practical struggle for survival

PYGMIES

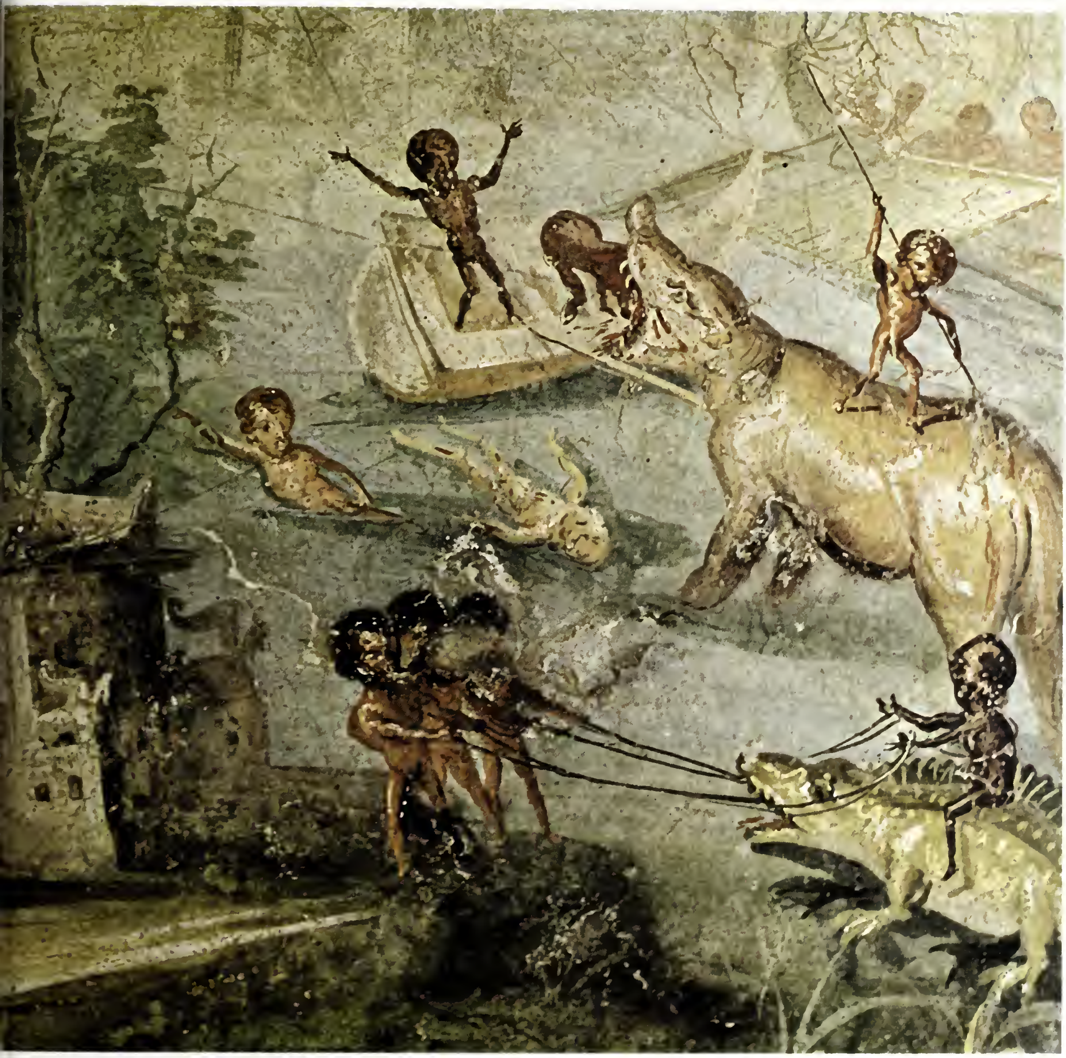
BELONGING to the smallest as well as one of the most primitive races of men, the pygmies are seldom taller than 4 feet 8 inches; they are primarily forest dwellers who survive by hunting and root-gathering. They have no settled communities, no agriculture, and cannot read or write.

The most typical of these little people are the Bambuti who inhabit the Ituri region of the eastern Congo. Here the trees grow to a height of 150 feet and are so densely packed together that they form a roof of leaves thick enough to prevent the tropical rains from reaching the forest floor. Such a forest knows only twilight by day and inky blackness by night. The silence is profound, for the animals that live in this primeval world move about stealthily, hunting and being hunted.

Deep within the Ituri forests live an estimated 35,000 pygmies in small family groups, setting up temporary shelters and always on the move in search of food. Survival, where there are none of the technical aids known to civilized men, depends on instinct. And because these African dwarfs have been so isolated from the outside world, they can truly be called 'dawn men'.

An integral part of their surroundings like other forest creatures, the pygmies have never 'invented' those gods who are supposed to control human destiny. They do not believe, for instance, in witches, evil spirits, or those taboos which are so characteristic of other African pagans.

They are not, however, devoid of some sense of the supernatural. They appear to recognize the existence of a supreme deity who is variously called Mungu and Nokunzi, although they can only describe him as another man, bigger and stronger than they are, but not particularly frightening since he is both good and bad, like any other man. He can, of course, make thunder



G. Tomsich Spectrum

The pygmies are intrepid hunters and this early Italian mural showing pygmies hunting wild animals is not completely fanciful

and lightning, but pygmies are not alarmed by these phenomena any more than they are by the screaming of chimpanzees or the trumpeting of elephants.

The reason for these little men's absence of fear is their complete familiarity with their surroundings. They accept the dangers of the forest as they accept its protection. Living in the half-light of the almost silent world of giant trees, they have become accustomed to the mysterious, and rarely lose their nerve when something unexpected happens. To them, a sudden movement in the undergrowth does not mean the presence of a ghost, but perhaps a snake slithering across the forest floor, in which case a pygmy will dive into the leafy mould and try to catch the reptile for food.

His profound knowledge of even those creatures which civilized men regard as either dangerous or repulsive, leaves him with little time for fears or superstitions. If, while out hunting, a group of pygmies spot a python hanging from a tree, they do not beat a hasty retreat, but advance stealthily, drag the snake to the ground, drive one stake through its head, another through its body, and then beat it to death. The same evening the python will feed several families. And this snake, which is worshipped as sacred by certain West African tribes, is merely another source of food to the pygmies.

When left to themselves in the depths of the forests the pygmies are too busy staying alive to acquire anything resembling an organized religion. Even death for them is only another event in their day-to-day existence, and though they grieve for the loss of a loved one, they do not attach any spiritual significance to dying, and do not blame the gods or the malevolence of witches. They do not believe, that is, in an afterlife, but that death ends everything.

The pygmy's indifference to religious ideas undoubtedly arises from the simplicity as well as the rigours of a life which leaves him very little time for reflection. Everything about existence is, for him, a question of survival. And because women are his equals

Patellani, Milan

The pygmy's hard struggle for survival leaves little time for religious activities *Above* A group of pygmies dance in a jungle clearing *Left* Pygmies armed with their principal weapon, the bow and arrow *Below* Pygmy hunter from the Central African Republic *Right* Attic vase in the form of a pygmy carrying a dead crane; classical legend tells of cranes making an annual attack on a dwarfish race of men

in this endless struggle, men do not dominate women as in other primitive societies.

The pygmy is usually monogamous, not because there is a law against having several wives, but because in a balanced economy one wife is enough. In fact, the pygmy cannot get a wife at all unless he provides, in exchange, a woman from his own family to take the place of the girl he is taking away from her parents. Marriage is not a question of buying a wife, as in other Negro societies, but a bargain based on 'head for head'. The pygmy only gets a wife if he can offer a sister or near relative as compensation for depriving the parents of a food-gatherer and house-builder.

Nor are these little forest-dwellers troubled by complicated sexual taboos. Pygmy girls, when they come of age with their first menstruation, are not rigorously separated from the community, since blood is not regarded as an ill-omen. A girl's first period is merely thought to be the result of sexual intercourse, which is not considered reprehensible. On the contrary, this easy-going attitude gives unmarried girls the opportunity to name the boy they fancy as a prospective husband; and the coming of age is, therefore, a gay time for the girl herself, for her friends, and for the boys. The girls have considerable freedom in choosing their future husbands; and while they are permitted a certain promiscuity before marriage, they are expected to be faithful once they are wed. If a child is born out of wedlock, it belongs to the mother and her family group and will be accepted without complications. An anthropologist who admired a pygmy baby and asked who was the lucky father was told quite simply by a young man, 'We are all its father.'

One of the rare taboos pygmies tend to observe is for mothers-in-law and sons-in-law to avoid each other as much as possible. The same restriction applies to fathers-in-law and daughters-in-law. No doubt this custom is related to the universal abhorrence of incest among primitive people.

In Peace and Love

This absence of taboos, superstitions and complex tribal relationships adds up to one of the most simple and, at the same time, harmonious societies in the world. The pygmies do not have national, let alone racial, problems, since they live in small clans, or family groups, and live in peace and co-operation among each other. Serious quarrels and disorders are rare. The likeliest cause of dissension is between husband and wife if the former proves to be a poor provider. In such a case, the wife might refuse to cook for her spouse or sleep with him, and will even beat him.

Nobody, including the old and sick, needs go hungry, since all food is shared and, in general, all possessions, such as they are, are held in common. The clans exist as an integral unit, with each member of them equal to the other. There is not even a chief as in tribal societies.

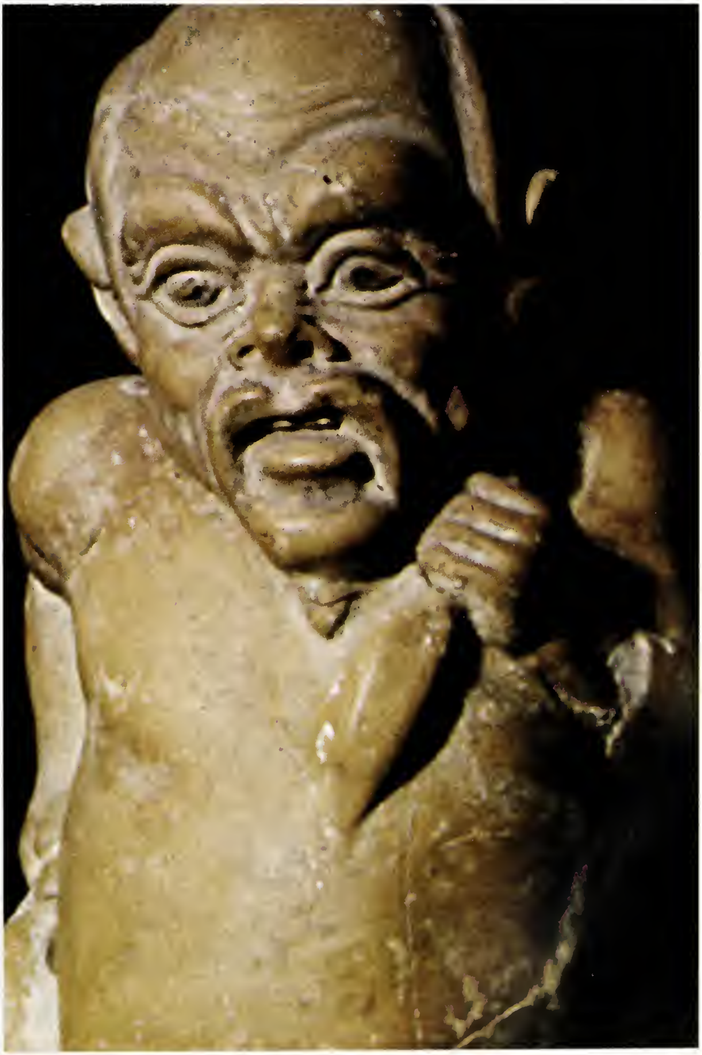
Yet there are several serious crimes in the pygmy code. One is adultery, another theft, and a third violence on the part of children towards their parents. But there are no set punishments for misdemeanours, beyond the disapproval of the clan.

All these customs and practices, it should be noted, are characteristic of those pygmies who have managed to remain more or less isolated from the world beyond the frontiers of their forest homeland. But for hundreds of years now, groups of these little people have been in contact with the Negro tribes who inhabit the river valleys of the eastern Congo and Ruanda. Their contacts with white men, on the other hand, have been very infrequent, though missionaries have made some attempts to convert them to Christianity.

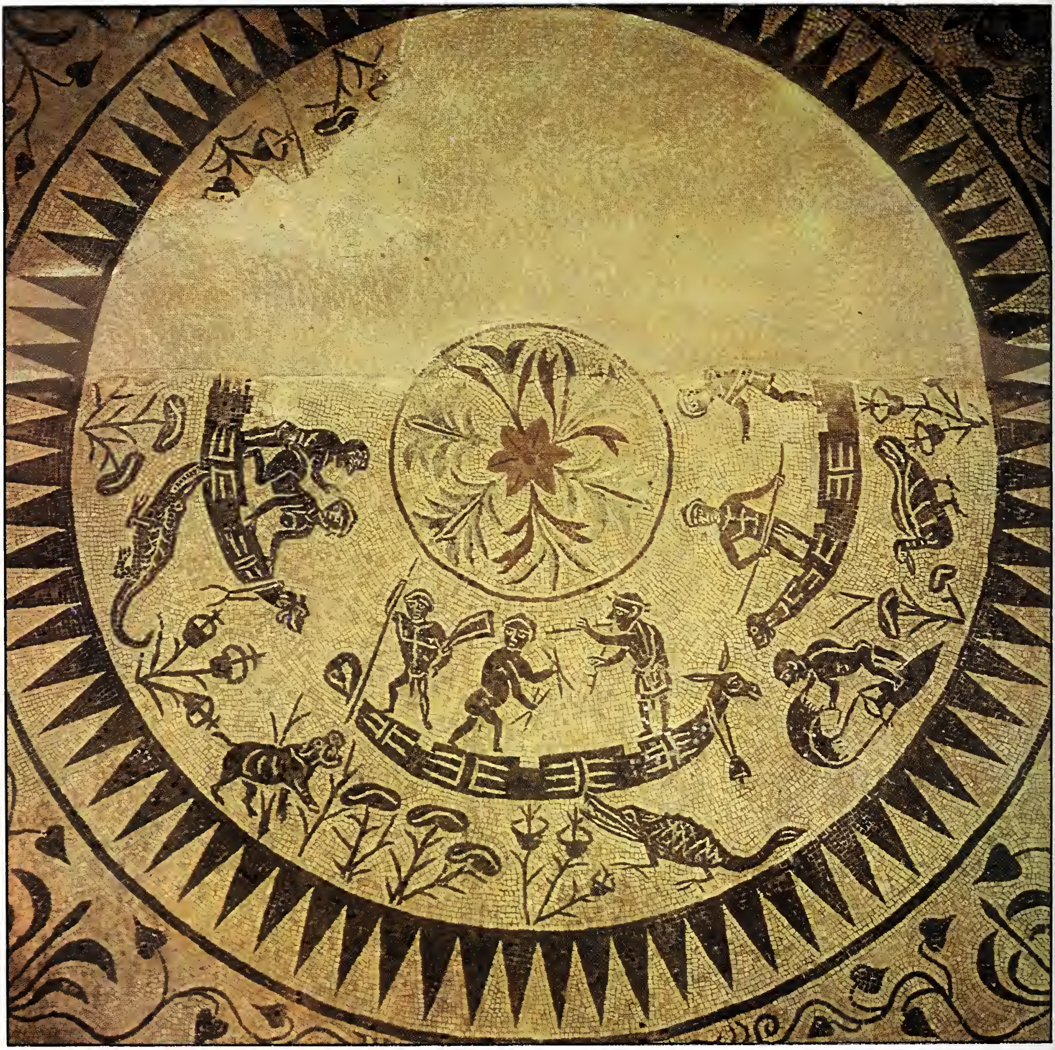
But where the pygmies have come into contact with Negroes, visiting the black men's villages for trading and sometimes staying long enough to become servants, they have adopted some of the Africans' traditional beliefs in magic, witchcraft and various forms of fetishism.

Typical is their acceptance of the ritual of circumcision, which is alien to the pygmy culture, but which these little people accept in order to prove that they are equal to their big black overlords. Circumcision among nearly all Negro tribes is a religious or magical cult practice, symbolic of a boy's coming of age, entitling him to be a warrior, to marry, set up house, and to have his say at tribal councils.

But, as we have seen, the pygmies are not really interested in any of these dominant male activities and only submit themselves to the operation out of pride. Their boys offer



British Museum C. M. Dixon



C. M. Dixon

Nilotic mosaic showing pygmies on the Nile; classical writers believed that pygmies were a race of dwarfs somewhere in Ethiopia

themselves for the ceremony under the same rigorous conditions as the young Negroes. They suffer the same physical and mental tortures which always accompany this ritual. They are separated from their families, placed in special camps, deprived of food, forced to dance in crouched positions, and even beaten by their elders. After the period of initiation, they are taken to a sacred grove where they are cut. The operation is performed by a witch-doctor, and the boy is required to limp towards a log on which his companions sit. The mutilated penis is wrapped in a leaf packed with salt for hygenic as well as psychological reasons.

Sometimes the boys are danced to by witch-doctors daubed in white clay and covered with bundles of raffia, and they are sometimes made to dance themselves. In all this, a pygmy boy will make a special effort to suppress his emotions so as to prove that his people are the equal of Negroes, for while these little people are unconscious of race, they are aware of the deep difference between themselves and the rest of the world.

To the extent that they have left their forest sanctuaries to trade with and work for the more advanced Negroes, they have acquired some of the beliefs and taboos of their masters and have become conscious of the power of magic, both black and white. Yet there are still no genuine witch-doctors among them, nor do they blame sudden deaths on witches.

They remain, in fact, extremely vague in their concept of God and all those divinities, good and bad, which more sophisticated people worship or fear. Dr Paul Schebesta, who lived with them, described them as 'the happiest people on earth', even though they have no organized religion and know nothing of the blessings of modern civilization.

JAMES WELLARD

FURTHER READING: Paul Sehebesta, *Among Congo Pygmies* and *My Pygmy and Negro Hosts* (AMS Press reprints); Colin M. Turnbull, *The Forest People* (Simon and Schuster, 1961); *Wayward Servants*, (Greenwood).

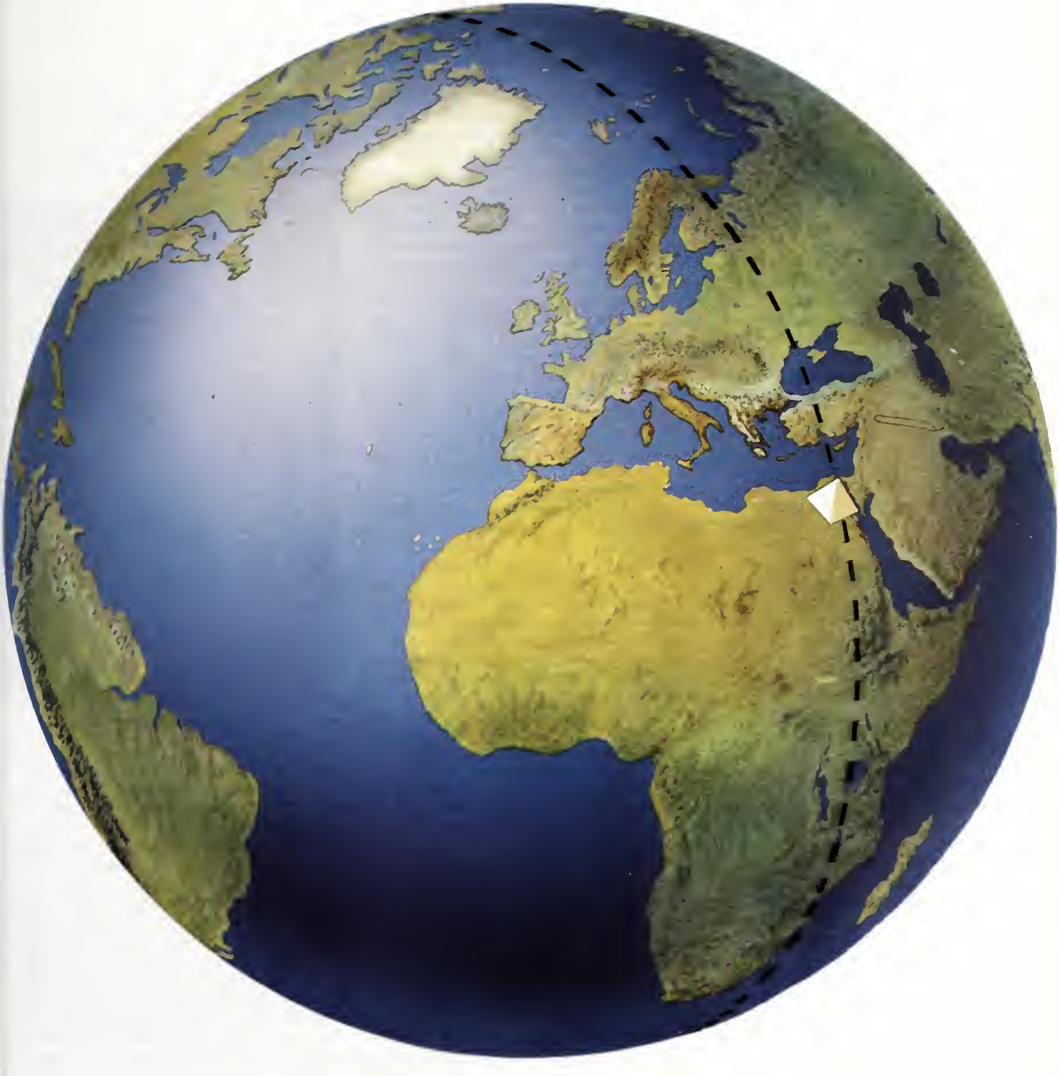
PYRAMIDOLOGY

THE THEORY FIRST PROPOSED by John Taylor in 1859, and developed by the Astronomer Royal, Charles Piazzi Smyth, in 1864, maintained, firstly, that the Pyramid of Cheops (the 'Great Pyramid') was built to express a knowledge of the mathematical irrational *pi*; secondly, that its measurements embodied a totality of geodesic and astronomic knowledge; and thirdly, that these measurements also embodied in cipher form prophesies relating to the events that would later form the body of the Old Testament, as well as the complete future history of Christendom up to and including the Second Coming of Christ.

Though the pyramids of Egypt had been a subject for speculation since the time of Herodotus in the 5th century BC, pyramidology proper was an essentially Victorian phenomenon and can only be understood in reference to its time. Napoleon's expedition to Egypt had opened the eyes of the West to the magnitude of the civilization of ancient Egypt. The French archeologist Jean Champollion (1790-1832) succeeded in deciphering the Rosetta stone, giving access to the meanings of the hieroglyphs, and the new field of Egyptology was born.

The intellectual world at this time was split into two rough but distinct camps. On the one side the scientists and academicians – the inheritors of the beliefs of the previous century's 'Enlightenment', violently anti-religious and atheistic, convinced that the secrets of the universe would shortly yield to a mechanistic Newtonian explanation, and firm in the belief that man had progressed gradually but inexorably from savage or animal beginnings to a state of civilization.

The religious camp formed the opposition; equally violent in its belief, perhaps more numerous, but disorganized, and adhering to a form of fundamentalism, the belief in the literal truth of the Bible. A strong,



One of the arguments used to support the belief that the Great Pyramid was built with supernormal knowledge is that it stands on the line between the North Pole and the South which crosses the greatest amount of land

Peter Castle/Camera Press London

specifically English and American, subgroup of this movement were the British Israelites (or Anglo-Israelites), who believed that the Anglo-Saxon race descended from the ten lost tribes of Israel (see LOST TRIBES).

The fundamentalists, in their way, were as materialistic as their opponents, and required some material 'scientific' proof in order to support their views. The Great Pyramid of Giza provided an admirable cornerstone upon which to build. The magnitude of this structure, its rigorous geometry, the fact that it was oriented precisely to the cardinal points of the compass, and sited to within minutes of the 30th degree of latitude; that double its height divided into the length of its perimeter gave a close approximation to the value of *pi*; that amazing technical expertise had gone into the levelling of the plateau upon which it stood, and into the joining of its huge blocks of stone; all this seemed to the fundamentalists to be evidence that a mighty civilization had existed, possessed of advanced science and divine knowledge.

However, since they were reviled in the scriptures as representing all that was unholy, and shown by the new translations to have been worshippers of dog-headed gods and crocodiles, the builders of the Great Pyramid could not have been Egyptian. Charles Piazzi Smyth wrote, in *Our Inheritance in the Great Pyramid*: 'In speaking of anything in this book as simply sacred, I mean, to the best of my poor and limited ability, to distinguish such things as sacred to the God of Israel, i.e., to the one and only true God who liveth for ever and ever, and I have no respect of the same kind nor similar comprehensive word, for anything attributed to the Gods of Egypt, Assyria or Babylon . . .'

The Pyramid Inch

It was in this climate that pyramidology was born. It was virtually complete at its inception in John Taylor's book *The Great Pyramid; Why was it built? And Who Built it?* Among the many intrigued by this work was Charles Piazzi Smyth who, on Taylor's insistence, travelled to Egypt to take rigorously scientific measurements, no mean task at that time; and it was Smyth's book, *Life and Work at the Great Pyramid*, which, with the apparent authority of science upon it, struck the public imagination.

Smyth's great contribution to pyramidology was the 'pyramid inch', corresponding to 1.001 standard inches (the other 0.001 having been lost over the course of history), upon which all subsequent pyramidological prophecy was based.

The subject of Egyptian weights and measures was in any event a complex one. The ancient Egyptians employed a variety of different cubits, spans, palms and digits, which obeyed no discernible single standard. Thus it was in no way disturbing that no known Egyptian measure corresponded to Smyth's 'pyramid inch'; it was even used as necessary evidence to support the contention that the Great Pyramid, alone among the many ruins of Egypt, had been constructed by a divinely-inspired non-Egyptian race. Then, in 1865, another early pyramidologist, Robert Menzies, put forward the idea that prophecies and biblical history were inscribed into the Pyramid in the ratio of one pyramid inch per solar year – and pyramidology was complete.

By taking detailed measurements of the perimeter, sides, outer courses of masonry, inner chambers, galleries and corridors, by dividing the result by certain numbers held to be significant in the construction of the pyramid, and by relating the results to biblical chronology and to the history of Christianity, exact correspondences were discovered. By the same token, an understanding of the cipher was supposed to permit the making of prophecies up to the Second Coming which, following the pyramid-inch-per-year theory up the Grand Gallery, was clearly close at hand.

Argument arose, however, over the method of dating; one faction maintained that the birth of Christ should stand at the starting point, so placing the Second Coming in 1911, while others decided that the starting point should correspond to the Resurrection, pushing the Second Coming back to 1936. Pyramidologists claimed that such events as the accession of the first Labour Government to power, and the Papal Bull inviting all Catholics to Rome to attend Holy Year (1924), were foretold and duly inscribed into the measurements of the Grand Gallery. Though a society of pyramidologists still exists, the movement appears to have lost most of its popular appeal.

There was a flurry of interest in 'pyramid power' during the 1970s, following the report of the filing of a patent in 1959 by a Czech engineer named Karel Drbal. He maintained that used razor blades kept beneath a cardboard model of a pyramid would remain mysteriously sharp, and for a time sold his patented cardboard and styrofoam pyramids in Czechoslovakia.

Drbal said he had been told that the dead bodies of animals which had strayed into the Great Pyramid and died there did not decay in the normal way but became mummified. It seemed as if the pyramid shape somehow affected the physical, chemical and biological processes going on inside it.

The concept was publicised in Sheila Ostrander and Lynn Schroeder's *Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain* (1970), and taken up by Lyall Watson in his bestseller *Supernature* (1972). For a time pyramids of all sizes were sold as meditation aids, healing and longevity devices and general spirituality boosters.

Although orthodox authorities insist that there is nothing mysterious whatever about the pyramids, it remains possible to suggest that there is a mystery, and that it has not yet been solved. According to I.E.S. Edwards, Keeper of Egyptian Antiquities in the British Museum, 'The true pyramid was merely a representation in stone of the sun's rays shining to earth through a gap in the clouds, and by its possession the king could transport himself at will to the celestial kingdom of the sun god.' But set against the statement that 'Egypt lies in an almost rainless area, where the temperature is high by day and sinks quickly at night in consequence of rapid radiation under the cloudless sky' (*Encyclopedia Britannica*), this conclusion seems open to question. Since the celestial kingdom of the sun god was visible most of the time, it may seem odd to the non-specialist that the Egyptians should expend such effort emulating a phenomenon they seldom, if ever, saw.

J.A.WEST

FURTHER READING: William R. Fix, *Pyramid Odyssey* (Mercury Media, 1978); John Michell, *View Over Atlantis* (Garnstone Press, London, 1969); C. Piazzi Smyth, *Our Inheritance in the Great Pyramid* (Steiner Books, 1978); Peter Tompkins, *Secrets of the Great Pyramid*, Harper & Row, 1978); Max Toth and Greg Neilsen, *Pyramid Power* (Warner, 1976).

Divine Plan of the Ages

Much and rapid travelling and unprecedented increase of knowledge are outstanding characteristics of our present day. We are therefore in 'the time of the end,' and since 1914 the Old Order is being broken up. Accordingly, the due time has come when God said He would reveal the future 'times and seasons' of His plan, hitherto concealed throughout all ages. Consequently, the major matters in the Book of Daniel and other prophetic Books of the Bible have been revealed right on time, and in addition, like any wise architect, God has disclosed where His drawings are. Moreover, these plans are portrayed on better material than paper, namely, in stone, within the largest and most substantial building in the World, the Great Pyramid of Giza – in what seems to be a most unlikely place, camouflaged and concealed, ostensibly in a pharaoh's pyramid so as to keep them a profound secret and unsuspected all down the ages till the present due time, divinely appointed...

It is not yet generally known that the Almighty arranged for His great and wonderful plan to be portrayed in symbols of stone long before the Bible was written. Modern discovery and research have revealed the fact that this, the World's most massive edifice, symbolically and by measurement, declares the great Divine Plan of the Ages from the beginning to the consummation.

As we can now demonstrate that the Great Pyramid was built under Divine inspiration, this fact in itself proves that God thought that it was necessary for us, therefore it does not matter what we think. It is not for puny man to begin debating with the Almighty as to whether the Pyramid is necessary or not if God Himself in His infinite wisdom sees that it is necessary. Had it not been necessary God would not have had it built. Therefore if we ignore or neglect the Pyramid in these perilous days at the close of this Age we will miss something valuable which God has specially provided for us in this day and generation. The Great Pyramid displays the Christian religion upon a scientific basis in response to the scientific appeal of our age.

Adam Rutherford *Pyramidology*

The doctrine of Pythagoras placed a special emphasis upon the significance of numbers as symbols of cosmic principles, discerning a mathematical system in the apparently disorderly universe

PYTHAGORAS

THE DISCOVERIES attributed to Pythagoras, the Greek mystic, mathematician and philosopher, in the fields of geometry, music and astronomy have had a major influence in Western history, yet he left nothing of his own in writing. He was born c 580 BC and died c 500 BC. The details of his life and of his doctrine are known only through the writings of followers, commentators and detractors.

A native of Samos in Greece, son of Mnesarchus, an engraver or merchant, Pythagoras studied with various Greek masters. He won the heavyweight boxing championship in the 48th Olympiad, and then set out upon long journeys, some of which are almost certainly fabrications of his followers. Although the Pythagorean doctrine of the transmigration of souls and reincarnation bears much resemblance to Indian doctrines, the accounts of Pythagoras having spent years studying with the Brahmins in India are probably false. It is also extremely unlikely that he travelled to Britain and studied with the Druids. But it is highly probable that much of his time was spent travelling throughout the Near East, learning from the priests of the temples of Egypt and Babylon.

G. Tomsich

The extent of the knowledge he brought back from these travels has always been a controversial subject. It is usual to discount those ancient sources which claim that Pythagoras was principally a transmitter of ideas rather than their discoverer, not because there are facts to support this view but largely because Western scholars prefer to believe that all pre-Greek civilization was primitive – even though technically and artistically accomplished – and devoid of mathematical, scientific, philosophical or astronomical knowledge.

Recent work, however, has shown that certain discoveries invariably attributed to Pythagoras – such as the 3,4,5 triangle – were known in Egypt and Babylon, raising again the question of sources. It is no longer improbable that, as the philosophers Porphyry (c 233-308 AD) and Iamblichus (c250-325 AD) maintained, Pythagoras learned his geometry and astronomy in Egypt, and his astrology and science of numbers in Babylon and Phoenicia.

Returning from his travels, Pythagoras set up a school or 'brotherhood' in the Italian city of Croton, dedicated to musical experimentation (he taught that all phenomena were fundamentally harmonic by nature, a view largely corroborated by 20th-century physicists), and to the study of geometry, mathematics and astronomy combined with a religio-ascetic discipline.

His teaching having met with enormous initial success, Pythagoras made the fatal error of attempting to carry his ideals into the practical world of politics. He succeeded in establishing a philosophical and ethical aristocracy in a number of Greek city states, but the hold was tenuous and foredoomed: the desire for external liberty and the incapacity to submit to the discipline essential to internal liberty that so commends the Greeks to the modern West asserted itself.

Cyron, rejected by the brotherhood because of his violent nature, became its implacable enemy and succeeded in fomenting rebellion. In successive coups, the brotherhood lost all temporal power and ultimately, in a massacre, most of its advanced members.

Thereafter, though never a secular or organized force, the Pythagorean doctrine was carried forward into Western culture by his followers. It is expounded almost unadulterated in Plato's *Timaeus*, seems to vanish for several centuries, reappears in the 1st century AD in the Neo-Pythagorean writings of Apollonius of Tyana (see APOLLONIUS), and again vanishes. It reappears with Plotinus, Proclus and the Alexandrine Neoplatonists (see NEOPLATONISM), and is injected into Christendom by Boethius in the 6th century AD, an influence that was most strongly felt in the Middle Ages.

But whereas in philosophy and literature the Pythagoreans are known, in art and architecture they are somewhat shadowy presences; their influence and knowledge is obvious but the names of those responsible for keeping the tradition alive and pure are unknown. Meanwhile, as is invariably the case, innumerable followers distorted and misused his teaching in numerology, black magic, astrology and so on.

'Number is All'

The Pythagorean doctrine resembles other mystical and religious teachings in that it held that the universe is a divine creation and that in the divine plan man was placed to fulfil a unique purpose: carrying a spark or germ of divinity within him, his role was to conquer and destroy his animal nature (the biblical Old Adam) and nurture and encourage the divine. The doctrine differed from other systems in the emphasis it placed upon number, and upon the essentially numerical disciplines of geometry, arithmetic and music. A much-quoted Pythagorean principle was 'Number is all'.

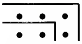
Until very recently, this aspect of the teaching was treated with little respect in the modern West. While Pythagoras was given full marks for his geometry, music and theory of the solar system, his so-called 'number mysticism' was believed to be an inherited residue of the superstitious past. It has been said that 'Numbers... were conceived at that early stage of thought, not as relations or qualities predicable of things but as themselves constituting the substance or essence of the phenomena'. However, since it is now clear that the qualitative distinctions we make between phenomena are fundamentally numerical, the Pythagorean doctrine reappears in modern dress. Our senses operate through the reception of vibrations of differing frequencies. Red is red because of its frequency or 'number', and so it is with every sense impression that we receive, without exception.

Creation was explained by the Pythagoreans as the division of the primordial unity into multiplicity and diversity. Other traditions expressed the same idea in terms of myth or legend, with deities representing the various universal principles of birth, love, strife, fertility, growth, maturity, death, renewal and so on, a mode of expression inescapably inviting embellishment and misrepresentation. Conceivably it was to avoid this danger that Pythagoras taught his disciples the numerical, geometric and harmonic bases underlying the myths. But if this was his objective, it failed; once the vows of secrecy were broken, all were free to make what they would of 'All is number'.

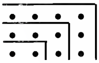
Numbers, to the Pythagoreans, were not abstractions as they are to us. They were symbols representing cosmic principles. Each number had a form or forms, made up of unity points, and from a study of these forms and the manner in which they generated sequences of numbers, an understanding of the underlying principles could be achieved. Thus numbers were held to be triangular, square, linear or rectangular by nature.

Though ultimately requiring complex considerations upon many levels, the whole of the philosophy of numbers flowed from distinctions originally created by the primordial division of the One into multiplicity. According to the Pythagoreans this act of genesis necessitated ten opposing categories: odd and even, limited and unlimited, one and many, right and left, male and female, rest and motion, straight and curved, light and darkness, good and evil, square and oblong.

Though at first glance a curious mixture of geometry, biology and ethics, and disparaged by scholars as based upon 'fanciful analogies', a brief geometrical demonstration can show how the Pythagoreans derived at least a few of their categories simultaneously. The number 2, the prototype 'oblong' number, was written • •. The next oblong number was 4:

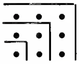


which generated the next, 6:

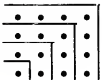


Thus it may be seen at a glance that all oblong numbers necessarily generate rectangles which change shape with each step (tending constantly closer and closer toward the square but never finally reaching it). Oblong numbers may therefore be said to be in 'motion', 'unlimited', 'many' and by extension and application, and by analogies perhaps not altogether fanciful, 2 acquired its other properties as well.

Contrast it to 3, the first 'square' number. (Strictly speaking, 1 was not a number, but a symbol for the Absolute containing the possibilities for all numbers within it). The number 3 generates 5:



which generates 7:



successive squares which, because constant in shape, may be said to be at 'rest', hence 'limited', hence partaking of the nature of 'one' as opposed to 'many'.

Upon such considerations, the Pythagoreans arrived at specific numbers and specific figures which, embodying certain principles held to be particularly important, were regarded as 'sacred'. The figure known as the Tetractys, for example, representing 10 (see NUMEROLOGY), was holy because it summed up in triangular form the principle of 1, 2, 3 and 4; its internal relationships determined the musical octave, the trinity at its core was enshrined in the seven notes of the octave, the harmonic laws upon which all things come into being.

As Theon of Smyrna (c 130 AD) wrote: 'if the single string in the monochord is divided into four equal parts, the sound produced by the whole length of the string forms with the sound produced by three-quarters of the string (the ratio being 4:3) the consonance of a fourth'. In the same way, the ratio 2:1 corresponds to the octave, and the ratio 3:2 to the fifth.

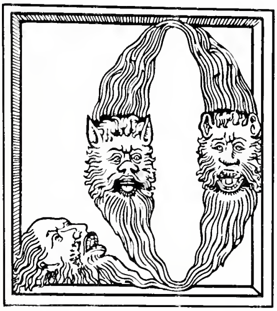
It was in their desire to impose such simple numerical relationships upon everything in the cosmos that the Pythagoreans came up with the doctrine of the harmony of the spheres. They assumed the Earth to have a perfect spherical shape and therefore, by extension, they thought that the surrounding universe should also have this form.

According to Aristotle (who never referred to Pythagoras himself by name, and possibly did not believe he had existed) the Pythagoreans maintained that at the centre of this spherical universe was an invisible fire, round which ten spherical shells revolved concentrically. The inmost but one of these spheres carried the Earth through one rotation per day; and the inmost sphere bore an invisible 'anti-Earth'. On spheres progressively further from the centre the planets moved: in order, Moon, Sun, Venus, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn; and the tenth sphere bore the fixed stars.

The most remarkable feature of this theory was the harmony of the spheres. It was natural for the Pythagoreans to suggest that the radii of the spheres were related in simple ratios, and from this they deduced that the movement of the spheres would result in a diapason of tones whose pitch depended upon the radius, and hence the relative velocity, of each sphere. It is not that we are unable to hear this heavenly music: accustomed to it from the moment of our birth, we do not notice it.

It was according to such harmonic principles that the Pythagoreans conceived their cosmos. Study of the Tetractys revealed to them an unfolding and rich world of meaning and significance and, bizarre as some of their philosophy may appear to us, it remains a fact that, following recent discoveries in quantum physics, wave mechanics and relativity theory, a number of eminent physicists and mathematicians have taken up a position which they call 'Neo-Pythagorean'.

J.A.WEST*



Quartz

Widely distributed mineral, of which rock crystal is a variety; used in scrying and believed to have the power to make the unseen visible and the seen invisible; among Australian aborigines quartz crystals are an important item of the equipment of a medicine-man, and are used in rain-making ceremonies; in the Shetland Islands, believed to cure barrenness when dropped into a pool in which women wash their feet.

See JEWELS.

QUEEN OF SHEBA

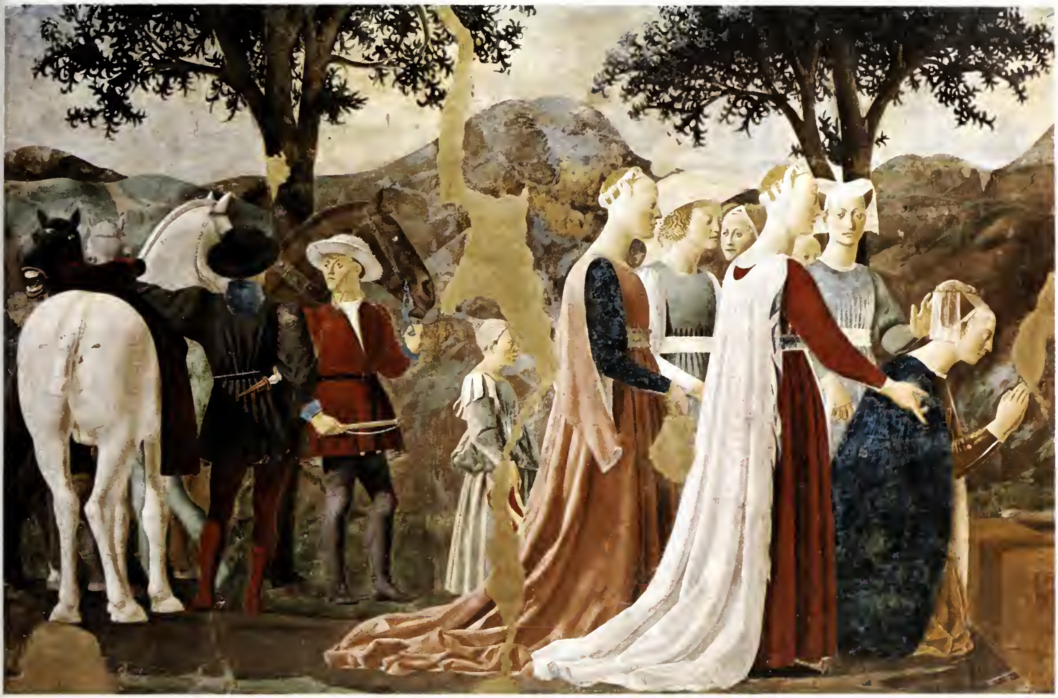
WHO ACTUALLY WAS the Queen of Sheba, that romantically mysterious oriental princess who travelled across the desert to visit King Solomon? Scholars have tried to solve the enigma of her nationality, and travellers have searched for her country. But no one has yet succeeded in identifying this royal lady who, as the Bible tells us, came to Jerusalem 'with a very great retinue, with camels bearing spices, and very much gold, and precious stones'.

The original story (1 Kings 10.1-13) states that the Queen came to see Solomon because she had heard so much about his wisdom; and after she had questioned him departed, saying 'The report was true which I heard in my own land of your affairs and of your wisdom'. It is also stated that the two monarchs exchanged gifts, Solomon receiving 120 talents of gold and a great quantity of spices; and the Queen 'all that she desired, whatever she asked'.

On the basis of these few facts, an extensive mythology has grown up around the shadowy figure of the Queen of Sheba, especially in Arabian countries and in Ethiopia, both of which claim the princess as their own. For a royal lady who travelled in such style strongly appealed to the oriental imagination. In addition, a king like Solomon, who was rich, wise, generous, Godfearing, and the master of a splendid harem, was the ideal monarch. It was only right and proper that two such remarkable people should come together.

In the Arab legends, the Queen is called Belkis, and her kingdom was Saba, which was situated in southwest Arabia, in the region the Romans called Arabia Felix, the present-day Yemen. Her capital city was Mariaba (Marib), and here French archeologists discovered the ruins of a great palace, which was traditionally the royal residence of Queen Belkis.

The official Arab version of the Old Testament story is found in the Koran in those chapters of the Moslem bible (sura 27, 30-31, 45) which describe the Sabaean queen as 'ruling over a people who prostrate themselves to the sun'. In other words, she was a pagan and sun worshipper, though



Scala

The Queen of Sheba adoring a bridge made from the wood of the True Cross: detail from a fresco by Piero della Francesca

this does not explain why Solomon ordered her to come and visit him. At first she was afraid to do so and sent instead a present of 6000 boys and girls, all born on the same day at the same hour.

In a later version of the legend, Solomon, who understood the language of the birds, sent his message to Queen Belkis by means of the hoopoe, who carried the letter under his wing. The message summoned Belkis to the palace at Jerusalem, a journey which was said to take seven years. But so eager was the Queen to meet the King of the Jews that she set out immediately and arrived in the record time of three years. Then the famous interview took place at which she tested Solomon's wisdom by asking him a series of riddles. Jewish legends provide us with several examples, of which this is one: 'The Queen said, "Seven depart. Nine enter. Two pour. One drinks." Solomon replied, "Seven days represents the period of a woman's menstruation; nine months the period of her pregnancy; two pouring is a reference to her breasts; and one drinking, a reference to her baby."'

Woman of Fire

The Arab version of this famous confrontation has a happy ending, for even though Solomon accused Belkis of having hairy legs when he first met her, he did eventually marry her, presumably adding her to his collection of 300 wives, 700 concubines, and the 6000 boys and girls she had already sent him. However, he thought enough of her to bury her, when the time came, in a magnificent tomb in the city of Palmyra, which stood on the northern edge of the Syrian Desert.

The Ethiopians have an even more colourful legend than the Arabs, which explains, incidentally, their claim that their kings are descended from a union of Solomon with the Queen of Sheba. The story is told in an ancient Abyssinian book entitled the *Kebra-Nagasht*, 'The Glory of Kings', in which the Queen is called Makeda meaning 'woman of fire', an Ethiopian princess who first heard the story of Solomon's wisdom from the merchant Tamrinn, the owner of 73 ships and 580 camels.

This man had made a special trip to Jerusalem to see Solomon whose kindness to his servants and slaves impressed Tamrinn as much as his wisdom. Queen Makeda was also impressed, and decided to visit Solomon herself. After a long voyage, she arrived in Jerusalem, where the King assigned her a palace next to his own. They saw each other every day, after which Makeda returned to her palace 'full of delightful thoughts'. Each day the King sent her 45 sacks of flour, 10 fat barons of beef, 5 bulls, 50 sheep, an unspecified number of goats, deer, cows and chickens, a barrel of young wine, a half-barrel of old wine, honey and baskets of fried locusts. It is no wonder that Makeda said to her generous host, 'I would like to be one of your servants and to wash your feet, for I am overcome by your handsome appearance and by your charming conversation.'

In the meantime Solomon had said to himself, 'A beautiful princess has come from the ends of the earth to see me. Who knows if it is not God's will that she should have offspring by me?' Solomon accordingly gave Makeda a great banquet on the eve of her departure at which he plied her with highly-spiced foods – for a reason that will soon become apparent. Then he took her to her room and asked her to marry him. The princess agreed, provided he promised not to touch her. King Solomon accepted this curious condition and added one of his own: that he would not touch her, provided she did not touch anything of his, including the furnishings in the room. During the night Makeda, tormented by thirst, slipped out of bed, tip-toed across the room to the water jug, picked it up, and drank. Solomon, who was staying awake for this eventuality, immediately challenged the princess with breaking her vow. She admitted that she had done so and gracefully conceded that he was no longer bound by his oath.

The next day Queen Makeda left Jerusalem for her own capital, Aksum in northern Ethiopia, giving birth to a fine baby boy on the way. And it was this son of Solomon and Makeda who, as Prince Menelik, was the first of the royal line of Ethiopian kings, officially known from that day as the 'Elect of God' and the 'Lion of Judah'.

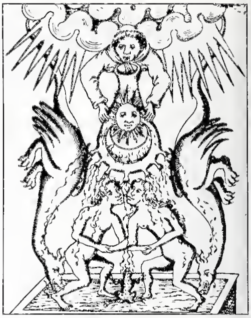
Quetzalcoatl

Feathered or plumed serpent god of Central America; god of the wind and the breath of life; also a culture hero and divine king, first ruler of the Toltecs, who taught men the calendar and arts and crafts; there was a legend that he would return and when Hernan Cortes, the conquistador, landed in Mexico in 1519, he was thought to be Quetzalcoatl.
See AZTECS.

Brooklyn Museum

Quicksilver

'Live silver', a name for mercury, referring to its mobility; the fact that mercury combines opposites, being a metal but also liquid, and a liquid but not wet, contributed to its particularly important role in alchemy.
See MERCURY.



'By doing nothing, the soul becomes nothing and returns to its original nature, which is God's own essence'

QUIETISM

QUIETISM in its specialized sense denotes a heretical Christian movement which came into full flower in the 17th century in Spain, Italy and especially France, although its roots stretched far back into the past. The word can also be more generally applied to any doctrine which denies the importance of the human will in the attainment of perfection, and Eastern mystical ideas, as well as Western, contain elements of Quietism.

The essence of Quietism is the belief that unity with God can only be achieved by inaction, through a state of passivity so extreme that the soul itself is annihilated; only so can it be reborn, and return to God. The Quietist's attitude to prayer, meditation and mystical exaltation is based on complete confidence in God's goodness; he adores his Creator, into whose hands he passively entrusts himself, for the best is whatever God decides.

A systematic exploration of one's conscience is the first step on the Quietist path, an often giddy descent into the self, to depths where the soul can rediscover its Creator. This is an essential feature of Quietism; the perception of God takes place beyond the realism of intellect, emotion and sense, in the depths of the self, in a vast region where the Ineffable reigns. The way there is arduous; and it is only by stripping away personality, accumulating suffering, undergoing repeated ordeals that man emerges from the chrysalis of self and is reunited with the Creator.

Descent into the Self

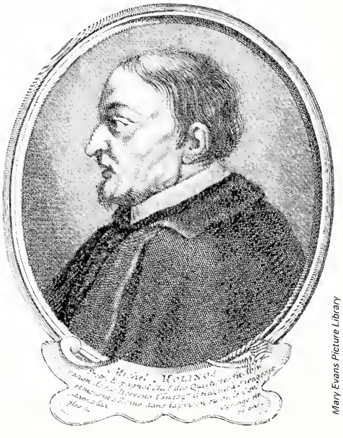
The first requirement of this spiritual discipline is ascetic solitude: pious habits, devout acts, prayer and even the sacraments cannot help to achieve this inner fire which is completely subjective, silent, secret. The consolations of religion cannot be offered. Prayer and confession can offer no effective relief. There is no place here for priests or spiritual mentors; the believer must proceed of his own accord to the descent into the self which will lead him to slough off the old spirit and be regenerated in the Absolute Beyond.

The second requirement is a spiritual stillness, engendering calm and bringing the joy of transcendental peace. By fusing with the divinity, the soul takes part in God's own perfection, finds pleasure there and remains as if in paradise.

'Pure love' constitutes the crowning glory of this extraordinary surge towards the vast light of divine radiance. It can be recognized by its ardour and total detachment. Step by step the Quietist comes to reject even the idea of reward. In the course of this spiritual shedding of the self, he renounces his place in heaven. Some even reach a state of exaltation in which they desire hell, since in accepting damnation their resignation is pleasing to God.

In the Middle Ages, the annihilation of the spirit as a way to enlightenment was recommended by such mystics as Johann Tauler (1300–61) and the great Rhenish intellectuals of the 15th century. The groups known as the Beguines and the Beghards, which grew up in Holland and Germany in the 13th century, not only rejected spiritual effort but sought to free themselves of the burden of all moral responsibility, on the grounds that what happens to the passive believer, including temptation and 'sin', must be what God wills.

Portrait of Miguel Molinos, 17th century Spanish theologian and leading exponent of Quietist doctrines, who was sentenced to life imprisonment for heresy. He believed that 'the violence of our temptations is a liberating force and Satan must be allowed to have his way with us as God wills' and at his trial he defended his sexual sins as acts of purification



Mary Evans Picture Library

A strong stand was taken by the Council of Vienna in 1311, which denounced teachings of this sort as attempts to establish that man represents God's work and is equal to him, without responsibility, without sin, and not subject to the Last Judgement. It considered that the doctrines would give rise to secular apathy, with grave consequences, and that to support them would bring about schism. The Council's decrees were carried out by the Inquisition and the heretical movements were persecuted. In 1329 certain ideas advanced by the great German mystic Meister Eckhart were condemned for their Quietist tendencies (see ECKHART).

The Void of the Will

Despite the Church's attitude, a vein of Quietism is to be found in the teaching of many saints, a number of whom fell under the Church's suspicion before they were canonized. Theologians have noted Quietist traits in St Anthony, St Clement, St Dionysius the Areopagite, St Augustine, St Catherine of Genoa, St Catherine of Siena, St John of the Cross, St Teresa of Avila, St Francis de Sales and St Jeanne Françoise de Chantal. They are also to be found to a marked degree in the mystical breviary, *The Imitation of Christ*, attributed to Thomas à Kempis.

These great mystics declared themselves devotedly passive in their perception of the Divine. In her ecstatic incantations, St Catherine of Genoa extolled Pure Love, self-sufficient and self-destructive, and the need to return our Creator's love for us, as Pure Love springs from him. She declared: 'My being is God' and, what disturbed the authorities, 'My Self is God, and I recognize no other Self than my God.' Introspection thus reveals God within us; God becomes our self; self equals God.

St John of the Cross (see JOHN OF THE CROSS) went further in his rejection of mental activity. He extolled 'the void of the will', and was nicknamed 'the Doctor of Nada' or 'nothingness'. He was imprisoned in Toledo, and there his visions were renewed to the point of ecstasy. During this time he described his soul as being 'alive with love' and moved by 'the love of God to the point of total self-contempt'.

In the 17th century, the Roman Catholic Church, caught between the Reformation and Jansenism, saw itself attacked for the barren formality of its rites and the spiritual impoverishment of its monks. Anxious to prevent schism, and firmly opposed to the belief that an individual could have direct contact with God without the intermediation of the Church, the authorities harassed the followers of the Quietist leaders Juan Falconi in Spain and Jean de Bernières and Francois Malaval in France. After Malaval had openly advocated the surrender of personality, abstention from good works, and the right to make one's own way to God, his books were burnt by the Inquisition and he was suspended from that time forward from pastoral duties.

Sympathy from the Pope

Most eminent among Quietist leaders was the Spanish theologian Miguel Molinos (1627–96), who took Quietist doctrines with him to Rome, where they met with considerable popularity among bishops and cardinals, and even with the Pope himself. His success aroused the hostility of the Jesuits, who instigated his arrest and trial on charges of heresy; he was sentenced to life imprisonment. Molinos preached that the powers of the soul must be eliminated; the will to act offends God. One must surrender completely to him, like a lifeless body. Good works hinder the achievement of perfection; by doing nothing, the soul becomes nothing again, and returns to its original nature, which is God's own essence; this conversion makes it divine.

Fénelon and Mme Guyon

It was in France that Quietism entered its final and most controversial period, in the second half of the 17th century. A French widow, Mme Guyon wrote a number of influential mystical works of a Quietist nature, and devoted herself to travelling through Europe on an evangelical mission.

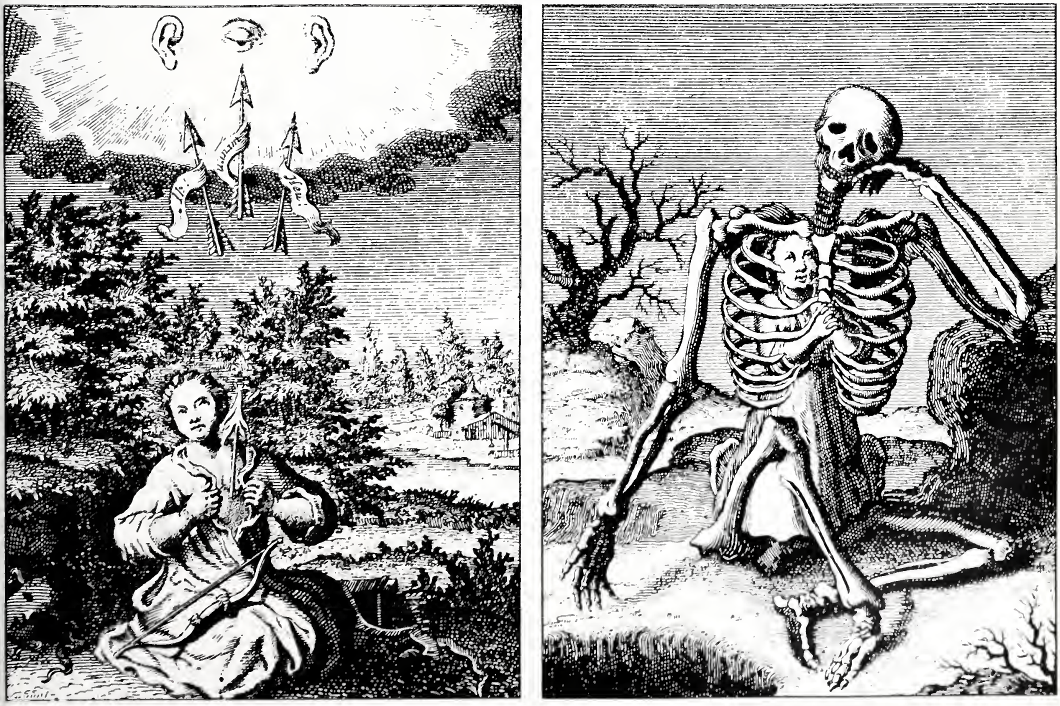
Among her converts, who included a number of highly-placed persons, was Fénelon, Archbishop of Cambrai. Fénelon was dazzled by her doctrines and believed her to be a saint and to have supernatural powers, but the Church considered her a dangerous and heretical nuisance. First arrested in 1688, Mme Guyon was again sentenced to imprisonment in 1695. Fénelon did his utmost to save her, and himself undertook her defence. His principal opponent was the influential Bishop of Meaux, Jacques Bossuet.

Bossuet attacked the extravagances of Quietism, scorning Mme Guyon's visions, dreams, premonitions and fits of delirium and ecstasy. Fénelon answered by setting out his mystical principles in his *Maxims of the Saints*. Bossuet maintained that Fénelon's Quietist views were inconsistent with Christianity. The theological quarrel became a personal battle, full of acrimony, and the court at Versailles was gripped by this dispute between two men prominent in the Church.

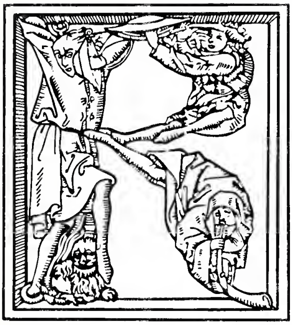
The joust continued for several years. Fénelon appealed to the Pope for a verdict, but at the same time a political intrigue developed, in the course of which he was ousted from the favour of both Louis XIV and Mme de Maintenon, secret wife of Louis and a former follower of Mme Guyon.

The King demanded action from the Pope and insisted on a severe sentence on the grounds that law and order in France were threatened. The Pope delayed his decision, unable to conceal his sympathy for Fénelon, but in 1699 he reluctantly condemned *Maxims of the Saints*. A papal letter was issued, criticizing 23 chapters of Fénelon's work, which were said to be redolent of Quietism. Fénelon bowed before this condemnation, withdrawing to his diocese and remaining there until his death in 1715. Mme Guyon was finally freed from imprisonment in 1702.

FRANÇOIS RIBADEAU DUMAS*



The Quietist principle is that the believer must surrender completely to God, like a lifeless body: two symbolic pictures illustrating passages from the Bible, from *L'Ame amante de son Dieu* by Mme Guyon *Left* 'Lord, all my longing is known to thee, my sighing is not hidden from thee' (Psalm 38) *Right* 'Wretched man that I am ! Who will deliver me from this body of death?' (Romans 7.24)



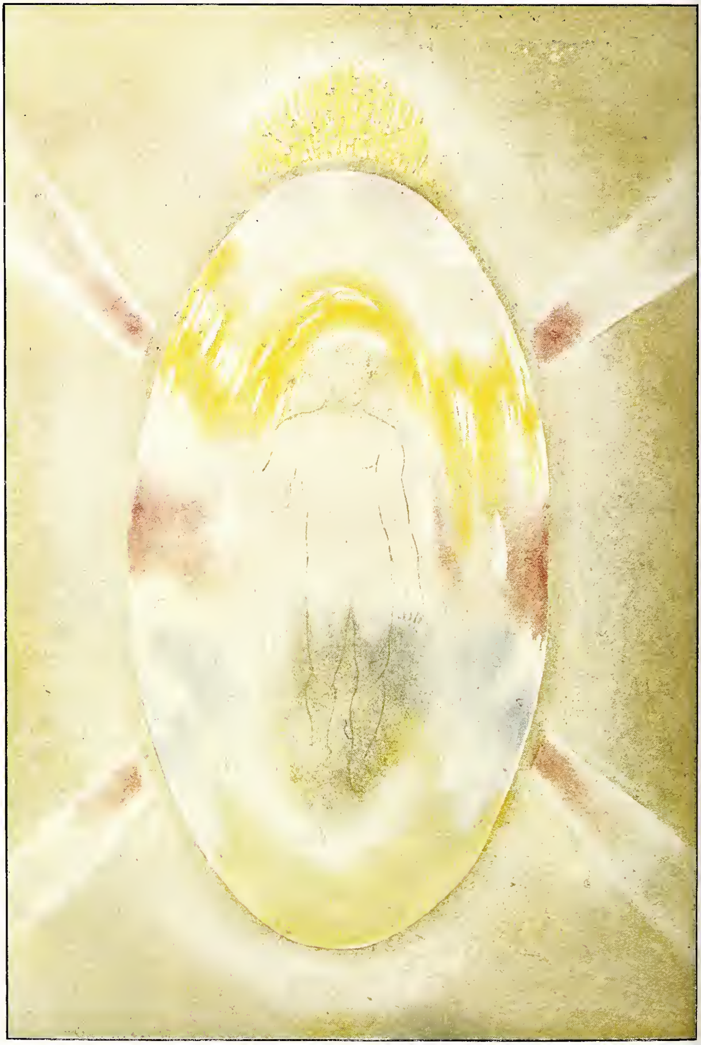
RADIESTHESIA

THE TERMS RADIESTHESIA AND RADIONICS refer to developments since the 19th century in dowsing, related to unorthodox medical practice and also to the use of pendulums in map dowsing. The practice of water divining is well respected and is acknowledged to produce results, even though no one really understands how it works (see DOWSING). The situation is entirely different with radiesthetic techniques for the diagnosis and cure of disease. The medical profession generally turns its back on radiesthesia, which is part of the world of 'fringe' or alternative medicine. Map dowsing has not yet established its respectability either and the more traditionally-minded dowsers view it with suspicion.

We are asked to consider two concepts: first, that all matter radiates on its own wavelengths; and second, that living organisms, meaning human beings, animals and even plants, emit electromagnetic wave radiations which depend for their intensity and frequency upon the source's general vitality and metabolism, and in the case of human beings, and perhaps even animals, on psycho-physical tone.

Thus, given the identification of a 'wave length' that appears on the basis of past experience to reflect some kind of pathological or psychic imbalance, the radiesthetic practitioner will attempt to correct this imbalance. This may be done by prescribing the appropriate medicines – and it is interesting to note that many specialists in this field use the homoeopathic *materia medica* (see HOMEOPATHY), probably because of the appeal of Samuel Hahnemann's law of affinities between certain drugs and the complaints which they are said to cure. Alternatively, some use radionic instruments to 'broadcast' treatment to distant patients.

Far back in the prehistory of radiesthesia is the medieval technique of divination



The aura of 'the Developed Man', from C.W. Leadbeater's *Man Visible and Invisible*: radiesthesia depends on the theory that living organisms emit some kind of electromagnetic wave radiations, which can be used in the diagnosis and treatment of disease

called 'the ring and the disc'. The magician dangled a golden or silver ring over a parchment disc on which the words 'yes' and 'no' were written. He then conjured up a spirit and asked it questions. The spirit's replies were conveyed by the gyrations of the ring over the disc. When Spiritualism reached France in the 19th century, the ring was replaced with a pendulum suspended above a glass. The tappings of the pendulum on the glass were interpreted as replies to questions on the basis of the usual code of one rap for 'yes', two for 'no'.

French dowsers became interested, and found that they could find water equally well by using a pendulum in place of the traditional forked twig – though without needing to believe that a 'spirit' was involved. Some dowsers gave up going out and walking over the ground in the customary manner of their trade. They found that they could stay at home and dangle a pendulum over a map to obtain results.

Some pendulum dowsers began to claim that they could diagnose disease. They would suspend a pendulum over a spot of the patient's blood on a piece of blotting paper, and they established different rates of pendulum vibration for each disease and also for each drug, which enabled them to select a remedy.

For the prehistory of radiesthetic theories one must look in the direction of Anton Mesmer's concept of 'animal magnetism' (see MAGNETISM; MESMER). He believed that there is a mutual influence, carried by an all-pervading but undefined fluid, between the celestial bodies, the earth and animated bodies. Baron Carl von Reichenbach (1788-1869), a distinguished chemist who was interested in Mesmer's work, discovered what he called the Odic Force, the manifestation of matter, alive or dead, which could be seen by sensitives.

From Reichenbach we proceed to the many theories about the existence and nature of the human aura (see AURA; DOUBLE). This may be considered, perhaps, as a field of magnetic force surrounding the individual human body. Another name for it is the 'etheric body'. According to Dr H. Tomlinson, a British physician who practised radiesthesia and at the same time had a highly esoteric approach to the subject: 'The magnetic field of the etheric is not the soul or essence of the human body – it is simply a magnetic field of influence which is detectable by the pendulum.'

The great modern pioneer of radiesthesia, especially in relation to the application of instruments to measure human emanations, was Dr Albert Abrams (1863-1924), Director of the Medical Department of Stanford University, California, who was certainly not esoterically minded. He was one of the first physicians to turn his attention to human 'wireless waves'.

Abrams became aware of the electromagnetic waves emitted by the human body when studying spinal reflexes by means of percussion. By chance he discovered that all tubercular patients gave a dull sound when percussed at certain spots on their backs, and that this dullness was evident in all cases of tuberculosis whether or not there was a tubercular lesion at that place or not. This only occurred when the patient was facing east or west, suggesting a relationship between the electromagnetic field of the earth and that of the individual.

Then he found that if he held a tubercular specimen, a piece of tissue, for example, over the back of the neck of a healthy person, the same dull effect happened on percussion. The next stage in these experiments was to link a patient and a healthy person by a wire. One end of the wire was placed on the patient's lesion and the other end on the cervical vertebra of the healthy person. Abrams found that when he percussed the back and abdomen of the healthy person he obtained the same dullness as when percussing the ill person. Hence, he theorized, 'waves' from the patient passed along the wire and temporarily altered the electromagnetic condition of the healthy one, who was called the 'subject'.

The Black Box

What was missing was a method of measuring these wavelengths, because it seemed to Abrams that every disease should manifest its own wavelength. Hence a scale relating 'disease x' to 'wavelength y' was needed for diagnostic purposes. Abrams developed a form of rheostat – a resistance coil with a dial calibrated in ohms. The rheostat was interposed in the electrical connection between the patient, or the specimen (a tube containing tubercular bacilli, for instance), and the subject.

The next stage was to establish the necessary scales. For instance, he discovered that in cases of malaria, dullness (when percussing) occurred with the rheostat set at 32 ohms, tubercular disease was equated with another 'rate', and so on for a variety of diseases. All radiesthetic procedures, no matter whether a simple pendulum or a more complicated instrument be used, require some table of 'rates' or measuring process.

Since diagnosis should logically be followed by therapy, Abrams experimented with a number of different drugs but was not satisfied with the results obtained. This led to his invention of the Oscilloclast, often known as 'Abrams' Box' or simply 'The Black Box'. This was a relatively simple apparatus, which was supposed to destroy infections through the application of measured vibrations, provided by a battery or mains supply, to break down the disease in the patient.

The Abrams' 'Box' proved to be a dead end, but stimulated research on the part of others, notably Dr Guyon Richards, an English physician whose instrumentation and measurement techniques were far more sophisticated. He was interested in diagnosis and did not use any apparatus for therapeutic purposes. Instead he prescribed homeopathic remedies.

L. E. Eeman, a lay researcher, found that, if a number of people are linked in a certain way with copper wire, an energy is transmitted along the wire from one person to another, and that if a drug is introduced into the circuit its expected effects are experienced by those thus linked.

A later development of the 'human emanation' principle was the theory that the physical presence of the patient was not necessary. The practitioner simply took a spot of the patient's blood, or perhaps a specimen of urine, on a piece of white blotting paper. It has been proposed by some that even a handwritten letter or a photograph is sufficient. Again, as in 'map dowsing', the preliminary procedure used by dowsers searching for water, oil or minerals before the actual field work begins, a chart of the organs of the body can be used to find the location of the disease.

All at Sea

In 1924, the year of Abrams' death, the British Medical Association appointed a committee, under a distinguished doctor, Sir Thomas Horder, to investigate the Black Box. To general astonishment, the committee reported that its enquiries had persuaded it of the existence of a mysterious and hitherto unrecognized force, but it decided that it could not regard the use of the Black Box as ethical because the force and its workings were not yet understood. The medical profession, however, continued to dismiss radiesthesia as quackery.

A curious experiment with map dowsing was carried out during the Second World War in Berlin, where a Pendulum Institute was established in 1942 to counter the machinations of British naval intelligence. The British were believed to be successfully employing dowsers to locate German U-boats at sea by dangling pendulums over maps of the Atlantic. The Institute's function was to learn these arcane techniques, so that they could be turned against Allied shipping. It was organized by Captain Hans Roeder of the German navy and there were high hopes for success, but no practical progress was made (see NAZISM).

Treatment at a Distance

After the War in Britain and America came a strong upsurge of interest in radionics, the term now used for instrumented radiesthetic work. There are two kinds of instrument: those used for diagnosis and those used for treatment. They are not automatic, and human reaction and skill are said to be needed for their successful employment.

The general principle is that the instrument is 'tuned' to the bloodspot or other sample provided by the patient and a diagnosis is then made. Specific radiations are broadcast through the ether by another instrument to the patient, wherever he or she happens to be. Thus it is not necessary for the practitioner to see the patient, who can be thousands of miles away.

Among the best-known radionic instruments were those devised by Dr Ruth Drown, an American chiropractor, and by George de la Warr in England. Ruth Drown invented a radionic camera, which could allegedly photograph the interiors of her patients' bodies at long range. A test of Dr Drown's black box at Chicago University in 1950 proved extremely disppointing. She was later accused of fraud and, although many patients gave evidence that they had benefitted from her treatment, she was

Images Colour Library

Images Colour Library

Images Colour Library

The use of the pendulum as a convenient dowsing instrument, not only in medical diagnosis but in an astonishing variety of other applications, from archeology (*above*) to the discovery of water, oil or minerals from maps – even the finding of missing articles and persons (*left*) – has developed to a striking degree in the past half-century. It has been employed in conjunction with a wide variety of alternative therapies: for instance, with colour therapy, as at the 'Prometheus' centre in England (*above left*); or in the prescribing of appropriate Bach flower remedies (*far left*)

found guilty on the basis that her instruments were not scientifically capable of achieving the results she claimed. She spent some time in prison before her death in 1966.

There were dark mutterings from her supporters about the conservatism of the medical establishment and the influence of the big pharmaceutical companies, allegedly fearing for their profits. Ruth Drown's instruments are not used much nowadays, in fact, but her 'rates' (dial settings) are still employed in many of today's machines. The use of such radiesthetic techniques is prohibited in the US under the 1976 Pure Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act, which prohibits diagnosis or attempted treatment by the use of such a device, except under stringently controlled conditions.

The de la Warr instrument resembles a fairly large old-fashioned portable radio receiver. It opens out like a suitcase. On the right above the tuning knobs, of which there are nine, there are two small cups in which blood or other samples are placed.

The diagnostic procedure is based upon finding the correct 'rate', by a process of 'tuning in' for any particular disease. Suppose, for example, that the patient is said to be suffering from a liver infection. The 'rate' in question is found in the appropriate printed table and the apparatus is 'tuned' by setting nine different dials accordingly. The diagnosis is confirmed, or otherwise, by stroking a thin rubber sheet, mounted at the base of the instrument, with the fingers of the right hand. The rubber will normally resist the movement of the fingers. The operator knows that he is on the track when he obtains what is known as a 'stick', when a crisper note or sound is obtained from the rubber strip.

The investigation is continued, using the dials in relation to more specific vibration rates and checking the results in terms of the 'sticks' obtained and the dial settings. It is claimed that a complete diagnostic picture can be achieved. No mains or battery supply of electricity is involved.

Then there are the radionic instruments used to 'broadcast' treatment to distant patients. The 'rates' are selected according to information provided by the bloodspot or other sample and the patient's progress is checked by using the diagostic instrument. V. D. Wethered, a radiesthetic practitioner, suggests that different people appear to differ very considerably in susceptibility to radiations of this kind, some being impervious to them while others are definitely affected.

In c1938 a Dr Brown invented a camera by means of which it was claimed that any part of the body could be photographed from a blood spot. Much later George de la Warr produced a camera for which even more remarkable claims were made. It was said that by photographing a homeopathic potency of aconite, a picture of the aconite flower could be revealed on the photographic plate.

In 1960, in what made headlines as 'the Black Box case', de la Warr was sued by a woman who claimed that his box was useless. The judge held that de la Warr was perfectly honest and sincere, but made blisteringly dismissive comments about his instruments. De la Warr succeeded in winning the case, but was crippled by the legal costs. He died in 1969.

The Flow of Life Energy

The next leading figure in the field in Britain was the late Malcolm Rae, who believed that accurate diagnosis of disease, and indeed the correct answer to any question, could be found by consulting the collective unconscious. He devised various machines and improved instruments, including a 'magnetogeometric potency simulator' for energizing a required energy pattern into either distilled water or tablets, which the patient would then take by mouth.

A lock of the patient's hair is often used for diagnosis and treatment purposes in radionics today, rather than a bloodspot. Many practitioners believe that each person (and each animal, for that matter) has a unique energy pattern, peculiar to the individual. The pattern, through which the life force flows, can be harmfully distorted by viruses, bacteria, physical injuries and psychological factors, and the fundamental purpose of radionic treatment is to remove the distortions and restore a harmonious pattern and the free flow of the life force.

There is an evident parallel with acupuncture (see ACUPUNCTURE; CHI). It is not radionics, but the patient's own life energy that is said to bring about a cure, and it is claimed that the success of the treatment is not affected by whether the patient has any belief or confidence in radionics or none at all.

Although the evidence for radionics is generally regarded as unconvincing, it is possible that in some cases radionic devices do work satisfactorily, not because of the boxes and machines themselves, which is electronically improbable, but by stimulating a practitioner with unusual gifts to bring faculties of dowsing and healing into play. Despite denials by practitioners, there is also almost certainly an element of faith healing in some cases where treatment is successful, and the patient is cured because confident of a cure.

Pendulum Archeology

A similar point can be made about the field of archeology, which is the other area in which pendulums and map dowsing have come into special prominence since the 1960s. It may be that the use of the pendulum stimulates the psychic faculties of the dowser. Some writers on the subject say that we all have a natural, inbuilt ability to dowse. All that is needed is practice.

One of the pendulum pioneers was T.C. Lethbridge (1901-71), a Cambridge University academic who discovered he had some skill with a divining rod and moved on to the pendulum. Dowsing with a pendulum, on the ground and on maps, has been used to discover ley lines, or supposed channels of electromagnetic force in the earth running between important prehistoric sites. Dowsers with rods and pendulums believe they have identified subtle energies at the sites and currents of energy in prehistoric standing stones. The British dowser Tom Graves, probably the best-known figure in this field, organized teams of dowsers to investigate some sites (see LETHBRIDGE; LEY LINES; MEGALITHIC MYSTERIES).

A dowsing pendulum is simply a balanced weight hanging on the end of a string or chain, or sometimes fixed at the end of a spring (a bobber). The length of the string should be that required to let the weight swing freely in a circle, clockwise and anticlockwise, without deliberate impulsion by the user. The dowser should be able to 'ask' the pendulum to oscillate to and fro or change to a clockwise or counterclockwise circling, without consciously impelling it. Meanings should be assigned to the various movements: 'yes' or positive for clockwise, 'no' or negative for anticlockwise, neutral for side to side oscillation. The pendulum is expressing what is in the dowser's mind.

An old-fashioned brass plumb-bob makes an excellent weight, though some people employ a crystal on a piece of thread, or a trinket of some kind, and Tom Graves said that something as mundane as a damp, used tea-bag works perfectly well. He defined dowsing as 'a way of using your body's own reflexes to help you interpret the world around you: to find things, to make sense of things, to develop new ways of looking and seeing.' As an additional sense, in effect. The divining rod or the pendulum acts as an amplifier which makes it easier to recognize tiny reflex responses in the diviner's body, such as a small movement of the wrist muscles.

Confronting the question of how dowsing can work when applied to a map or a photograph of the landscape, rather than the landscape itself, Graves has said that the important point is that it does work, never mind why. 'Dowsing rarely makes sense in theory, but does work surprisingly well in practice if you let it work.' This echoes the comment of the great French biologist Charles Richet, who said as long ago as 1913: 'We must accept dowsing as a fact. It is useless to work experiments merely to prove its existence. It exists. What is needed is its development.' ELLIC HOWE*

FURTHER READING: A. Mermet, *Principles and Practice of Radiesthesia* (State Mutual Books, 1981); Dr H. Tomlinson, *Medical Divination* (State Mutual Books, 1980); V. D. Wethered, *Introduction to Medical Radiesthesia and Radionics* (C. W. Daniel Co., 1957); T. Graves, *The Dowser's Workbook* (Aquarian Press, 1989) and *The Elements of Pendulum Dowsing* (Elements Books, 1989); F. Hitching, *Dowsing: The Psi Connection* (Anchor Press, 1987); A.L.G. Dower, *Healing With Radionics* (Thorsons, 1980); T. E. Ross and R. D. Wright, *The Divining Mind: a Guide to Dowsing and Self-Awareness* (Destiny Books, 1990).

RAINBOW

IN THE BOOK of Genesis (9.11-17), it is stated that, when the waters of the Flood had abated, Yahweh made a covenant with Noah, and promised that never again would he send a flood to destroy the world. As a visible sign of that promise, which all men might see, he set a rainbow in the sky, and he said to Noah: 'I set my bow in the cloud and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.'

This is the tradition of the rainbow's origin that is known to Christians and Jews all over the world. Other men, in different regions and different ages, have accounted for its existence and its intermittent appearances in a number of ways. In some mythologies, the rainbow is a living spirit, either a divinity or a demon. In ancient Greece the rainbow goddess was Iris, the wife of Zephyrus the west wind, and sister of the dreaded Harpies. She was also the messenger of the gods. On the other side of the world, in central Australia, the men of the Kaitish tribe believed that the rainbow was the son of the rain, and that he was often the cause of drought because, as a dutiful son should be, he was always anxious to protect his father from falling down. Consequently, if a bow appeared in the sky at a time when rain was desired, it was necessary to drive it away. Sir J. G. Frazer describes in his *Magic Art* (1926) how this was done by means of an elaborate ritual. The rainmaker went to the sacred storehouse of the group and painted the holy stones there with red ochre, and poured water over them and himself. Then he painted three small rainbows, one on the ground, one on his own body, and a third upon a shield which was also marked with jagged white lines to represent lightning. The shield was carefully hidden in a safe place, so magically imprisoning the real rainbow and keeping it out of the sky, until after the life-giving rain had fallen.

Thirst of a Murderer

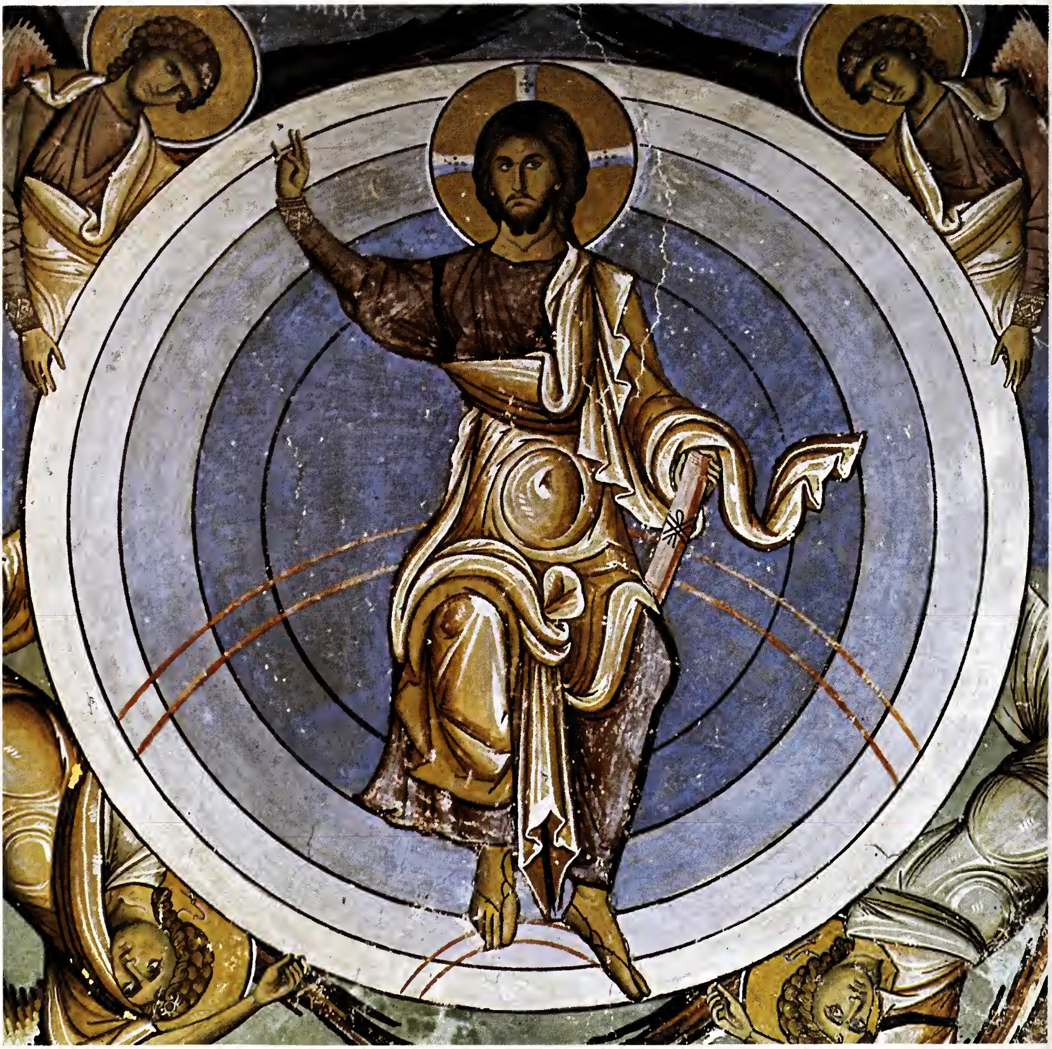
The Karens in Burma believed the rainbow to be a malignant and dangerous demon which could, and often did, destroy human beings by devouring their *ka-la*, or spirit. Any man who died by drowning, or through a fall, or who was killed by wild beasts, or came otherwise to a sudden and violent end, was thought to be one of its victims. When it had destroyed a person thus, it became thirsty, and was seen in the sky, drinking water. Its appearance was usually followed by another violent death, and children at play were hastily called home as soon as it was seen, lest they should be the next to fall into the demon's power.

Zulus also feared the rainbow, which they associated with snakes. It was said to live with a snake, or at least one would always appear whenever the bow was visible. When the rainbow was seen with its end touching the earth, it was believed to be drinking from a pool. Sometimes it lived in a large pool, and men were afraid to bathe in such waters, for fear that the rainbow might seize and eat them. On dry land, it poisoned any man it met, or afflicted him with disease. If it actually rested upon anyone, that person was certain to suffer some misfortune of a serious kind.

Amongst some Polynesian peoples, the rainbow was believed to be a ladder up which heroes climbed to reach heaven. In Hindu mythology, the great god Indra, hurler of thunderbolts and lord of the storm, used it as a bow with which he shot his lightning arrows. The same belief was held in Finland concerning Ukko, leader of the Finnish gods, who also controlled the thunder and brought rain, using the rainbow to shoot fiery copper arrows of lightning.

Bridge in the Sky

Bifrost, the sacred bridge of Scandinavian myth, was a rainbow bridge which linked heaven and earth. It was made of fire and air and water, and the bright colours of these three elements were seen glowing in its arch. The gods rode along it when they visited Midgard, the world of men; and they passed over it every day on their way to hold council by the Well of Urd, the spring at the foot of Yggdrasil, the World Ash-tree. Everyone came to the meeting on horseback except Thor, the god of thunder, slayer of


Sonia Halliday

The Ascension of Christ, from Cyprus, 12th century: the risen Lord is seated on a rainbow and has another at his feet: in the Old Testament the rainbow is the sign of God's covenant with man

giants and defender of Asgard, the home of the gods. He came on foot, wading through the deep rivers that Bifrost spanned, for fear that his great size might make him too heavy for the delicate bridge, or that the heat of his lightnings might injure it.

Only the gods could cross Bifrost, and the souls of certain warriors slain in battle, who had been chosen by the Valkyries and carried by them over the bridge to Valhalla, that splendid shield-roofed hall in Asgard, where the heroes spent their time in constant fighting and feasting. To defend the rainbow bridge from the frost giants and prevent them gaining access to Asgard across it, the god Heimdall lived beside it and kept constant watch and ward over it. He was a good guardian, for he could see what was happening 100 miles away, and his hearing was so keen that he could hear the grass growing on the ground and the wool growing on the backs of sheep. Moreover, when he sounded his horn Gjallar, its note could be heard through the whole universe. In his charge, Bifrost was safe, and would be so until the time of Ragnarok when, according to Norse belief, all things would be destroyed. On that day, Gjallar would sound for the last time to rouse the gods, against whom all the forces of evil would be unleashed. From Muspell, the region of fire, the giant Surt and his followers would come riding with drawn swords over Bifrost, and beneath their weight the rainbow bridge would at last be broken.

Traces of belief in the sacred nature of the rainbow survived in the folklore of many countries long after Christianity had replaced the old pagan mythologies. The ghost of Bifrost lingered almost to our own day in Germany and Austria – and perhaps does so still in some localities – in the tradition that the rainbow was a soul bridge, over which the dead who had died in a state of grace passed into heaven. Children were guided along the airy arch by their guardian angels; but the souls of the wicked and the unrepentant could not overcome the perils of the way. They were consumed in the raging fire which is visible here below as the red band in the bow. Two modern superstitions which also associate the rainbow with death have been recorded by Wayland Hand in his *North Carolina Folklore* (1964). There it is said that if a rainbow spans a house, there will be a death in that house before long; and if any person walks through the end of a bow, some member of his or her family will die within the year.

A common tradition, found in many regions, is that it is extremely unlucky to point directly at a rainbow, as indeed it is to point at the sun, or the moon, or any star. Another is that a wish formed when the bow first appears in the sky will be granted. A faint memory of old dreads seems to linger in the ritual whereby children in the English northern counties try (at least until very recently) to drive the rainbow away by 'crossing it out'. As soon as it is seen, two sticks, or two straws, are laid crosswise on the ground, with a small stone in the centre, or sometimes with a stone at each end of the cross. In north-eastern Scotland, the children shout at the tops of their voices a banishing rhyme which runs:

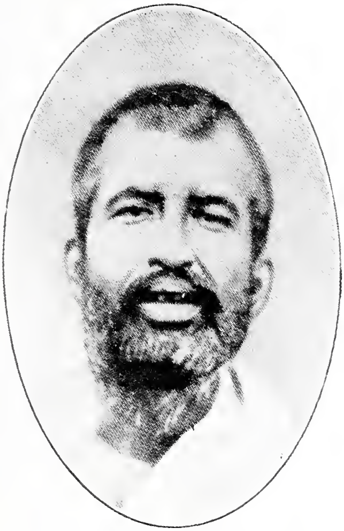
> Rainbow, rainbow, brack and gang hame,
> The cow's wi' a calf, the yowe's wi' a lamb,
> And the cow wull be calvit or ye win hame.

A well-known magical method of charming the rain away is for the charmer to say 'Rain, rain, go away; come again another day', or some other variant of the rhyme, whilst looking steadily at a rainbow. Country people still read weather signs from the manner and time of the bow's appearances. If broken parts of it are seen in the clouds, these foretell stormy, blustery weather, and are sometimes known as wind-dogs, or weather-galls. Seen in the morning, it is a warning to shepherds or, along the coasts, to sailors; but 'a rainbow at night, the rain is gone quite'. These prophecies, however, are not rooted in ancient myth or magic, but are based on the practical experience of generation after generation of countrymen.

CHRISTINA HOLE

RAMAKRISHNA

ONE OF THE WORLD'S great mystics, Ramakrishna wrote little or nothing himself, but his sayings and parables are recorded in numerous collections. Far from scholarly, he was sought out by some of the best scholars of India. He did not set out to create a new religion, yet ended by reforming one of the oldest religions in the world. The missions founded in his name extend from Calcutta to San Francisco: there are twelve Ramakrishna Missions in the United States alone.



Ramakrishna believed that 'however God may be worshipped, he is still the same Supreme Being, just as water is called by various names in different climes': many of his sayings have been recorded and the missions founded in his name extend from Calcutta to San Francisco

He was born in 1836 of orthodox Brahmin parents in an obscure village in Bengal, his father being the village priest. Later he was said to have been miraculously conceived and fabulous tales grew up concerning his birth, as indeed much of his life. He died in 1886.

Ramakrishna's first mystical experience came to him when he was seven. It happened just before a heavy downpour and black clouds were massed in the sky, when he suddenly saw a flight of snow-white cranes winging their way across the dark background. Dazed by the sight, he fell into a trance and lay unconscious for several hours. From then on throughout his life he remained precariously poised on the threshold between normal and trance states. At the age of nine, while appearing as the god Shiva in a village play, he was so carried away by his exalted role that he fell into an ecstatic condition and remained enraptured for three days.

When he was 20, Ramakrishna was appointed chief priest at the Dakshineshwar temple near Calcutta, dedicated chiefly to the goddess Kali (see KALI). In the Hindu pantheon this deity is one of the manifestations of Shakti, the great mother goddess, in whom are comprehended all the power and majesty of the cosmos. Her worship now became the focus of Ramakrishna's undivided attention and such was his ardour that he began to neglect his other temple duties.

Hoping that the responsibilities of married life might stabilize him emotionally, his parents arranged a marriage for him three years later. His bride was a girl of five. Ramakrishna and his child bride did not live together after their marriage: she went back to her parents and he resumed as best he could the work at the temple. He continued to abstain from sexual intimacy for the rest of his life. One of the great obstacles to the higher life, as he saw it, was the aggregate of lustful and voluptuous sensations inevitably associated with the sexual act, and he could not reconcile this all-consuming, though transient, passion with the decision he had taken to devote himself completely to the service of the goddess.

The Wishing-Tree

A man sitting under the shade of the Kalpa-vriksha (wishing-tree) wished to be a king, and in an instant he was a king. The next moment he wished to have a charming damsel, and the damsel was instantly by his side. The man then thought within himself, if a tiger came and devoured him, and alas! in an instant he was in the jaws of a tiger! God is like that wishing-tree: whosoever in His presence thinks that he is destitute and poor, remains as such, but he who thinks and believes that the Lord fulfils all his wants, receives everything from Him.

F. Max Müller
Râmakrishna, His Life and Sayings

Ramakrishna had no illusions about human nature. Some of his parables in simple homespun language are wonderfully to the point. The following example aptly conveys the irony of the human situation. 'Two friends were walking past a place where the word of God was being preached. One said, "I must go and hear this sermon and join the pious congregation in the worship of God." But from across the road came the sounds of revelry and the second friend said, "I think I prefer to join the merrymakers and flirt with the dancing girls." The two friends parted company, one to enter the temple, the other to sport with the revellers. In a short while the one who had chosen the house of pleasure tired of his amusement and was struck by the folly of what was taking place around him. He said to himself, "What am I doing? Why have I come here when I could have joined my companion in hearkening to the word of God?" Across the road his companion, bored with the monotonous drone of the preacher, said to himself, "I wish I had joined my companion in his fun instead of listening to this rigmarole." Which of these two, the sage might well ask was the better man? Or were they not both the same person? Two beings that dwell in each one of us.'

Many Paths to One God

The conviction grew upon Ramakrishna that only through personal experience could man perceive the truth, otherwise truth was impossible to grasp since it was several removes from the phenomenal world we see around us. To illustrate this, he gave the tale of the blind man who wanted to know what milk looked like. 'White, like a crane,' he was told. 'What is a crane?'

he asked, and received the reply, 'Like a sickle'. And in response to further questioning he was told that a sickle resembled a bent arm. 'Ah!' he exclaimed, as though suddenly enlightened, 'milk is like a bent arm.'

While in service to the goddess Kali, Ramakrishna's ecstatic raptures increased and he remained for long periods wrapt in contemplation before her image. He came to believe that the idol breathed and was alive, and that it heard and understood him as he spoke and sang hymns to it. After some months his fervent devotion was apparently rewarded for, he declared, one day the goddess revealed herself to him face to face.

Desirous of seeing the god Krishna, he dressed like a woman and imagined himself to be Krishna's favourite milkmaid, Radha. While immersed in this role he had a vision of the god. Similarly, in order to induce a vision of Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu, he took on the part of Rama's favourite general, the monkey god Hanuman, and lived on nuts and climbed trees.

Ramakrishna had little time for asceticism and the alleged powers it bestowed. He said, 'If twenty years of asceticism merely enables you to walk on water, better pay the boatman and save your time.' Nor had he any patience with 'theoretical' religion. He felt that religion was not a matter of creed and ritual but of inner experience, and was convinced that actual spiritual participation in other faiths was necessary for his own understanding of other people's beliefs and so ultimately of his own. He held that however God may be worshipped, he is still the same Supreme Being, just as water is called by various names in different climes, and may be drunk from silver goblets, from earthenware, or straight from the cupped hands, but it remains the same water and has the ability to quench man's thirst in whatever manner it is drunk.

After having personally experienced the presence of God in various faiths, Ramakrishna concluded that all religions were true and that fundamentally all were one, each tracing a different path to the same great goal.

(See also HINDUISM.)

RAMANA MAHARSHI

AT THE SOUTHERNMOST tip of India is a holy mountain named Arunachala; the very thought of it is said to liberate the soul from bondage. At its foot nestles the great temple of Arunachaleswara (Lord of Arunachala). From remote antiquity this hill has been reputed to be the earthly embodiment of Shiva the Auspicious One, the Lord of Perfect Knowledge and Supreme Bliss. Sometimes it attracts to itself a human form which it indwells as Shiva; such a form was Sri Ramana Maharshi, who heard and responded to the hill's compelling call.

Born in 1879, in the village of Tiruchuzhi in South India, as a boy Ramana showed no indication whatever of his future greatness. His father held a respected position in the village and Ramana's prospects were good in a worldly sense. But Shiva decreed otherwise.

Shortly before his 16th birthday, Ramana asked a relative where he had just come from. 'From Arunachala,' came the reply. This information affected the boy strangely. He knew that Arunachala was believed to be Shiva in the form of a hill, but he did not realize that it was an actual hill. When he found that Arunachala was merely the Sanskrit form of Tiruvannamalai – a district not far distant by rail – his interest evaporated. But from that time on, the name Arunachala began its work of transformation. A current of awareness began vibrating within him; it was not awareness of any 'thing' by any 'person', but a subtle sense of identity with something nameless and formless, something that was more himself than anything he had ever known. It was a foreshadowing of the Supreme Experience: total awareness of the *Atman* (Self), the eternal Self as distinct from the impermanent ego (see BRAHMAN). He became less keen on boyish pastimes and his interest in school-work vanished. Spells of prolonged introspection possessed him; he sat motionless for hours, oblivious of external things.

After the death of his father, in 1891, Ramana and his brothers went to live in an uncle's house in Madura, and it was here that he underwent a decisive spiritual experience. He was alone in his uncle's house when the dread of death assailed him. Characteristically, he did not think of getting help, but simply went into his room, lay down and awaited the end. Something made him slow down his breathing; then a power within him took charge of what followed. The violent shock had introverted his mind so intensely that it penetrated an entirely strange region of consciousness. He asked himself what it all meant; his breathing stopped completely and he sensed the imminence of death: 'All this was not a mere intellectual process,' he recalled, 'but flashed before me vividly as living truth; something which I perceived immediately, without any process of thought. "I" was something very real, the only real thing in that state, and all the conscious activity that was connected with my body was centred on it. The "I", or my "Self" held the focus of attention by a powerful fascination from that time forwards. Fear of death vanished at once and forever. Absorption in the Self has continued from that moment right up to the present.'

In 1896 he decided to leave home and go to Tiruvannamalai. When he entered the precincts they were empty, which was strange, for the temple normally hummed with activity. Stranger still, the doors of the inner sanctum lay wide open as if Ramana's coming was expected. He entered, and with tears of joy streaming down his face declared to the Holy of Holies that he had come in answer to an inner call.

Dispenser of Grace

Ramana began his life-long stay at Tiruvannamalai by meditating in the thousand-pillared *mantapam* (stone hall) in the temple grounds. At this period his youthfulness made him the butt of practical jokes and offensive attentions from ignorant people. An aged recluse named Seshadriswamy tried to ward off the hooligans, but it did not ease the situation for he was thought to be crazed. Ramana therefore left the mantapam for the dank cave hollowed out beneath it. Here again he steeped himself in meditation. He became emaciated, his hair grew long and his nails curled. Vermin attacked the flesh of his body and drank his blood. He ate only the little which the old recluse managed to force between his lips. This went on until a mendicant, horrified by his appearance, fetched a *sadhu* (holy man) to help him carry out the Buddha-like figure, which they reverently placed before a shrine of Shiva.

The uncanny silence of the youthful sage attracted attention and people flocked to receive his *darshan* (spiritual blessing). They sensed a tremendous concentration of divinity. Ramana then moved away to Pavalakunru, high up the hill, where, in 1900, his mother and elder brother found him after much searching, but failed to persuade him to return home.

Ramana was regarded as a *jivanmukta*, one who had realized identity with the Supreme whilst still in the body. By 1916 crowds of people assembled daily. He was called *Bhagavan* (Lord) and *Sri Maharshi* (Great Sage) by those who sought spiritual guidance. An *ashram* (spiritual colony) grew around him; visitors sat in a large hall where he gave darshan and answered questions about yoga and enlightenment. Sitting in the hall, or performing daily *pradaksinam* (ritual circumambulation) of Arunachala, Bhagavan gave peace, hope and happiness to all who approached him, regardless of sex, age, status, religious or political beliefs. His field was the whole of humanity; his teachings a unique interpretation of the age-old wisdom of the *Upanishads*.

In 1948 appeared the first signs of the cancer that was to deprive his devotees of the beloved presence that for more than 50 years had radiated happiness. Yet throughout his illness his spirit glowed even more serenely, more brilliantly, than ever before. Right up to the last day he insisted on giving darshan to the stream of visitors.

The end came in April, 1950, when Ramana was re-absorbed into Arunachala-Shiva – the Source of All. But people who visit Tiruvannamalai today declare that Bhagavan's presence is as potent as it was during his earthly life, and that his grace still flows swiftly into those who open their hearts and surrender to the spell of Ramana-Arunachala.

KENNETH GRANT

FURTHER READING: Arthur Osborne, *The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi* (Rider, 1959).

Popperfoto

Photograph of Rasputin with some of his admirers: he was regarded with reverence by the Empress Alexandra and her confidant, Anna Vyrubova. When he was murdered in 1916, the Empress had his body buried in a special chapel, to which she went for spiritual comfort

Half a century after the assassination of Rasputin, much remains enigmatic about the life of the 'Holy Devil' from Siberia who gained an extraordinary influence over the Russian Imperial court

RASPUTIN

GRIGORI RASPUTIN was born c 1871 in Siberia at Pokrovskoe on the post road to Tobolsk. His father, Yefim, and mother were peasants owning land and stables. In the winter the family slept on the stove; in the summer on a shelf below the roof. Pokrovskoe was pious and many pilgrims set off for Verkhoturie where the relics of St Simeon are preserved. There lived Makari, a *starets*, a holy man to whom pilgrims went for advice. Yefim picked up many roubles by driving passengers from the posting station and as Grigori grew up he often took this job off his father's hands. He picked up many stories from his fares and when he retold them he embellished them from his own imagination.

An accident which occurred when he was 12 years old profoundly moved him. He was bathing in the river Tura with his brother Misha when the latter got out of his depth. He tried to save him, and his cries attracted a peasant who dashed into the river and collected them; Misha died. But why should he be saved and his brother lost? He decided that he must have been preserved for a special purpose. Three years later he surprised his parents by deciding to make a pilgrimage to Verkhoturie. So with pack on back and staff in hand he set off secretly, but his father overtook him and beat him and brought him home.

When he was 18 he had to drive a monk to the monastery of Abalask. They talked of religion all the way, which stimulated the young man's interest in monastic life.

Abalask was celebrating a festival and was thronged with visitors, and there Grigori was presented to the Bishop of Barnaul, whose conversation reinforced Grigori's religiosity. At Abalask he met Praskovia, a peasant girl, and fell in love. The following year they were married and went to live in the family home. In due course Praskovia gave birth to a son who died prematurely. Grigori was prostrated with grief and went to consult the starets Makari in his forest hut.

He found Makari weighed down with chains which had worked deep grooves on his meagre body, but a benevolent face gazed out from the wilderness of hair. He was only 50 but he looked eternal. About Praskovia's lost child he said, 'Only six months old, he died without sin and will be gathered to the Lord of little children. Do not grieve my son, God has marked you out for one of his own.'

There was a bevy of cocks and hens outside the hut and when the starets came out one hen fluttered to his shoulder and began pecking at his mouth as if kissing him. The rest of the poultry followed him about, all clucking. 'My hens are talking about you,' said Makari, 'they say a man with your eyes is now going home but he will go far and further than far.' Grigori picked up a brown feather. 'This will remind me,' he said, 'I am going further than far, perhaps to Kiev.'

Among those listening when Grigori arrived home and recounted his adventures was his close friend Dimitri Pecherkin. He was deeply religious and was greatly moved by the reception Makari had given Grigori. Next day they went fishing but Dimitri was more interested in the starets than in fish. 'He said I was going to travel,' said Grigori. 'You can believe it,' replied Dimitri. 'He foresees, it has been proved.'

The Men of God

Some years passed. Praskovia bore him another son and two daughters. Grigori worked and fished and went to church and day-dreamed. One day, coming home from the fields, there was a flash from the sun and he saw the Holy Virgin. It was only for a moment and the vision was gone. He hurried home to tell his family, who did not know what to make of it. Grigori, greatly perplexed, discussed the vision with Pecherkin, who advised him to seek advice from Makari. So he set off once more for Verkhoturie and the forest hut, accompanied by his friend. Makari had no doubts about the matter. Such visions of the Holy Mother were not uncommon. 'It may mean you are to become a starets,' he said, 'you must go to Athos and pray for light on your way.'

Mount Athos was a long way off, in Greece, but Pecherkin was enthusiastic, and volunteered to make the pilgrimage with Rasputin. They set out, accepting lifts by river and waggon when these were offered, and when there was no other mode of transport, they walked. From Odessa they were deck passengers across the Black Sea, the cost being defrayed by a pilgrim society.

Eventually the ship came in sight of the Holy Mountain and they went ashore at the monastery of St Pantaleimon. As ordinary pilgrims, they were free to stay as long as they liked but, if intending to reside there, they had to work in the fields and workshops. For five days they fulfilled their religious duties with a joyous spirit but then Rasputin expressed a wish to return home. He had not received any special enlightenment.

Rasputin and the Tsarevich

It is strongly suspected that a decrease in emotional stress has a beneficial effect on bleeding. As calm and a sense of well-being return to a patient, his capillary blood flow will decline and the strength of his vascular walls increase. In this context, the question of whether Rasputin hypnotized the Tsarevich becomes a matter of degree. If, technically, it was not hypnosis that he practised, it was nevertheless a powerful suggestion – Prince Yussoupov's account gives an indication of its strength. When Rasputin used this power on Alexis, weaving his tales, filling a darkened room with his commanding voice, he did in effect cast a spell over a boy overwhelmed by pain. Then, as Rasputin assured him in tones which left no room for doubt, Alexis believed that the torment was receding, that soon he would be walking again, that perhaps they would go together to see the wonders of Siberia. The calm and sense of well-being produced by this powerful flow of reassuring language produced a dramatic emotional change in the Tsarevich. And as if by a miracle, the emotional change affected Alexis's body. The bleeding slowed, the exhausted child dropped off to sleep and eventually the bleeding stopped altogether. No one else could have done it, neither the anguished parents nor the terrified doctors. Only a man supreme in his own self-confidence could transmit this self-confidence to a child.

Robert K. Massie *Nicholas and Alexandra*

It was two years before Rasputin returned home and during this period he joined a sect known as the Khlysty, or Men of God. Up to the time of his death, Rasputin's enemies were to denounce him as a Khlyst. It is curious that when the Tsar first met him he noted in his diary, 'Today I met a Man of God from Siberia.'

The Khlysty held that the Holy Spirit had power to inspire young virgins to become begetters of Christs. At their meetings there would be *Bogoroditsi* – Christ-bearers, Christs and candidates. The chief mass was a *radenie* or 'fervour', in which all danced round a jar of water heating by a stove in the centre. The participants were in white cotton and the virgins held wands of twigs rolled in towels with which they beat the dancers, urging them to go faster and faster until they fell in hysteria. It was alleged that the hysteria was followed by promiscuous copulation, but this has not been proved. The task of the Christ-bearers was to inculcate the gift of prophecy, to teach the technique of healing through prayer and to learn how to expel demons, in all of which Grigori Rasputin became proficient. He also accepted the heretical dogma that to repent one must first commit sin. On the other hand he grasped the power of the inward turning of the Spirit.

Soon after his homecoming Rasputin began to turn a barn into a temple, painting it white and covering the interior walls with icons, raising a circle of earth in the middle and making a place for the boiling pot. He taught the young folk of the village the practices of the Men of God, which so angered the local priest that he denounced him to the Bishop of Tobolsk as a Khlyst. The Bishop sent two police officers to the village but Rasputin foresaw the move and set off on a pilgrimage to Kiev. Rasputin then appears to have reverted to Orthodoxy, acknowledging to himself that he was a 'failed Christ' but retaining his miraculous powers.

Introduction to the Tsar

As a *strannik*, or wandering pilgrim preacher, Rasputin with his long hair, piercing gaze and voice which compelled attention, attracted crowds, and many people went to church just to hear him discoursing afterwards at the church gates, or followed him to beer houses to discuss religion. His followers diverted him to markets, fairs and festivals off the main route to Kiev. The rumour of his coming, and with it the belief that he healed the sick, went ahead of him. When he neared Kazan many students from the seminary came out to meet him and led him to the hall of the theological college. He was an unqualified success and answered many questions concerning the true meaning of passages of the Bible.

After some months Bishop Michael of Kazan directed a monk to take Rasputin to St Petersburg and present him to Bishop Theophan. He also carried an effusive recommendation to the Seminary at St Petersburg. Rasputin decided that he must go to Kronstadt to meet Father John, a celebrated miracle-worker, who when he noticed Rasputin among the crowd in the cathedral called to him to come forward and receive Holy Communion before all others. Some days later Rasputin had an intimate conversation with him. Father John's introduction unlocked many doors in St Petersburg to Rasputin, and Bishop Theophan presented him to the Grand Duke Nicholas and Anastasia Nikolaevna. The Grand Duke was deeply interested in Rasputin and had a presentiment that he could be used politically. He decided to present Rasputin to the Tsar.

On 31 October 1905 the Grand Duchess Militsa Nikolaevna and her sister Anastasia Nikolaevna gave a dinner party for the Grand Duke Nicholas, at which the Tsar and the Tsaritsa were present. They talked much of the starets whom they had discovered. The party rose late and in the morning Militsa presented Rasputin to the Tsar. The Tsar noted in his diary for 1 November 1905: 'Today we came to know Grigori, the Man of God from the province of Tobolsk.' This was a grave turning point in the career of Rasputin, and of the Tsar himself.

In the previous year the Tsaritsa had prayed to the starets Serafim, at his shrine in Sarov forest, that she might bring forth a son and heir. The prayer was answered and Alexis was born. The Tsar in his great joy decreed that Serafim be made a saint and, mustering the Grand Dukes, he went to Sarov to shoulder the ancient relics of the starets Serafim in the ceremony of canonization.

The Tsaritsa felt that she would have the protection of the old peasant saint for the infant Alexis, who suffered from haemophilia, so that whenever he bled, even from a scratch, no aid short of the miraculous could stanch the blood. The role of saintly protector was transferred from St Serafim to Rasputin, who was always summoned to pray when the doctors had failed.

Rasputin first saw the child when he was two years old, when he was present at tea at the palace one afternoon. He brought presents of icons for the children who seemed to like him. On Alexis's third birthday the boy injured his leg and Grigori was sent for. When Alexis saw the burly peasant entering his bedroom he laughed, and so did Rasputin, and when Rasputin touched the injured leg the bleeding stopped. Turning to their Majesties, he said: 'Do not be alarmed, your son will live and at last the disease will disappear.'

Although it was not officially announced that Rasputin had been called in to heal the Tsarevitch, it soon came out in court gossip. Nothing could repress the Grand Duchess Militsa who had made Rasputin her pet, clothed him, built him a new house at Pokrovskoe and was forever praising the starets and magnifying his deeds.

Rasputin now had the backing of the higher clergy and Bishop Theophan went to stay at the new house at Pokrovskoe; he reported a godly establishment, furnished with the utmost simplicity. Rasputin also began to take a hand in politics, checking the impulsive Tsar when he thought of going to war in 1912: he was against any war which boded ill for Russia.

Miracles of Second Sight

The monk Iliodor, the 'mad monk', having graduated from St Petersburg, set out to imitate Rasputin, preaching and healing, and obtained a large following in eastern Russia. He became jealous of Rasputin's success and stole an affectionate letter which Rasputin had received from the Empress. Iliodor had it copied and circulated to members of the Duma, the state council. He nursed a suspicion that most of Grigori's miracles were achieved through copulation. Matters came to a head when Iliodor took Rasputin by surprise by denouncing him to the pious Bishop Hermogen and others. A free fight ensued and Rasputin barely escaped with his life. He hastened to take the story to the Tsar and Iliodor and Bishop Hermogen were both exiled. The monk had his revenge by sending to Pokrovskoe a woman who stabbed Rasputin in the stomach, exclaiming, 'I have killed the Antichrist'.

Radio Times Hulton Picture Library

Tsar Nicholas II of Russia and his family, about 1905: Nicholas and Alexandra were haunted by constant anxiety for their son Alexis, the heir to the throne, who suffered from haemophilia, and Rasputin's influence with them stemmed from his mysterious ability to stop the bleeding

The gift of second sight does not seem to have warned Rasputin of this attempt on his life, but in 1911 there was evidence of his possessing it. He was in Kiev when the carriage of the prominent politician Stolypin passed, and Rasputin shouted after him 'Death is for you. Death is approaching.' Next night Stolypin was shot and wounded by a revolutionary while at the theatre, dying a few days later.

Later, hearing that his reputation was being destroyed by mounting scandal, Rasputin cut short a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and hurried back to the capital. The most damaging of the stories circulating about him was that a woman named Anna Vyrubova had become his mistress. Anna Vyrubova had a small house near the palace. She was poor and did not even possess a new dress, but she was the intimate companion of the Empress. The house was a 'home from home' for the Imperial family and Rasputin was a frequent guest.

In January 1915 Anna was involved in a railway accident; she was thrown onto the carriage floor, her skull was fractured and her legs crushed and broken. The Tsar and Tsaritsa hastened to the scene to find her unconscious. Anna was taken to hospital and then transferred to the palace, Rasputin being summoned by telegram. When he arrived at the palace it was to find that Anna had not regained consciousness and the doctors despaired of saving her life. Avoiding the Tsar and Tsaritsa who were standing by the bed, he stared at Anna and whispered to her 'Annushka, open your eyes.' Astonished, the Emperor and Empress saw her obey. 'She will live,' Rasputin said, 'but will be a cripple for the rest of her life.' Staggering on his feet, his face covered in heavy sweat, he fell in a faint at the doorway.

Rasputin had temporarily fallen out of favour at court shortly before the First World War. The Tsar had not accepted his second sight about the impending war in Europe. Rasputin sent a letter to the Tsar warning him against becoming involved in the war, lest he plunge Russia into a 'sea of tears without shore'. This letter irritated the Tsar but things changed after the Vyrubova 'miracle' the following year.

Poisoned Cake at Midnight

From 1915 until his death in the following year Rasputin lived in an apartment on Gorokhovaya, paid for by the Tsar, with his wife and two daughters. For most of the day the samovar was hissing on the table and all were welcome to have tea with him. The house and stairs were crowded with beggars and petitioners, almost all of them strangers. On the wall were pinned scraps of paper bearing all manner of pleas: 'Your prayers are asked for my wife who is dangerously ill', 'My daughter is in prison for stealing bread, can you get her set free?'. There were also many requests from businessmen for contracts, which caused a widespread rumour that he was being used by German agents.

In 1915 a sharp reverse in the fortunes of war, in which Russia had ranged herself against Germany, led to an outbreak of spy mania. Somebody must be to blame, probably the Empress and her crony Rasputin who must be selling secrets to the enemy. The Grand Duke Nicholas, commander-in-chief of the army, had been betrayed. When in the early spring a well-trained German army appeared advancing over the hills, the vast but ill-trained forces of the Grand Duke took to headlong retreat. By August 1915 the Russian army was on the brink of total collapse and Russia herself on the eve of revolution. Rasputin and the Empress were strongly against the Grand Duke, and on 23 August the Tsar himself assumed the high command.

Mansell Collection

'A man with your eyes will go far': many who knew Rasputin commented on the hypnotic power of his eyes

The year 1916 was one of conspiracy and intrigue. Among the various factions was the 'English' party, who above all wished to make the conclusion of a separate peace with Germany impossible, and wanted to bring about the abdication of the Tsar, and a smaller group which plotted to contrive the murder of Rasputin, which would be a signal to the English party to go ahead with its plan for a palace revolution. Prince Felix Yusupov made himself responsible for the murder. Feigning friendship with Rasputin over several months, he eventually invited him to his palace at midnight, where he had prepared a dish of cakes impregnated with cyanide and a bottle of poisoned wine. He was also armed with a revolver. The meeting was on the ground floor, but there was a noisy party of conspirators upstairs.

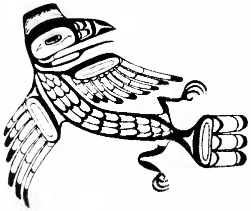
After talking for an hour or so, Yusupov invited Rasputin to take some cakes; Rasputin ate two or three. To the astonishment of Yusupov, Rasputin then became merry and said 'Come on, get your guitar and sing to me, let's go to the gypsies.' Yusupov poured some wine into one of the glasses. 'Good,' said Rasputin, 'now let's go to the gypsies.' As he stood up, Yusupov pulled out the revolver and shot him in the neck. Leaving Rasputin flat on the floor, Yusupov in great excitement rushed upstairs and told the other conspirators. Some of them went down and saw Rasputin, far from dead, blundering from door to door, each of which was locked. Shots rang out. At length Rasputin hurled his weight at a door and burst it open. He was in full flight when one of the conspirators, Purishkeyevitch fired the fatal shot. They tied his wrists together, bundled him along to a waiting car, and drove to the Neva, where they broke a hole in the ice. But according to some accounts, Rasputin was still alive when they pushed him in: he had managed to get one hand free. When his body was discovered, his right hand was found frozen to his chest, with three fingers clutched together. He had apparently died making the sign of the Cross.

STEPHEN GRAHAM

FURTHER READING: Robert K. Massie, *Nicholas and Alexandra* (Gollancz, 1968); M. Rasputin and Barham, *Rasputin*, (Prentice-Hall, 1977).

Raven

Large black bird of the crow family, possessed of a harsh croaking voice and an appetite for carrion, and generally of disturbing and sinister character in folk belief; frequently associated with battlefields, corpses and death; two ravens acted as the spies of the god Odin; Raven is an important figure in the mythology of American Indians of the North Pacific coast.
See CROW; ODIN; PACIFIC NORTHWEST INDIANS.



Re

Or Ra, sun god and 'great god' of ancient Egypt, closely connected with the kingship of the pharaohs; as the sun at dawn, represented as a beetle or beetle-headed man; as the declining sun, he was Re-Atum, an old and wise man; linked with the god Amun at Thebes; frequently linked with the falcon-headed sky god Horus.
See EGYPT; SUN.